JANUARY
Weird Tales
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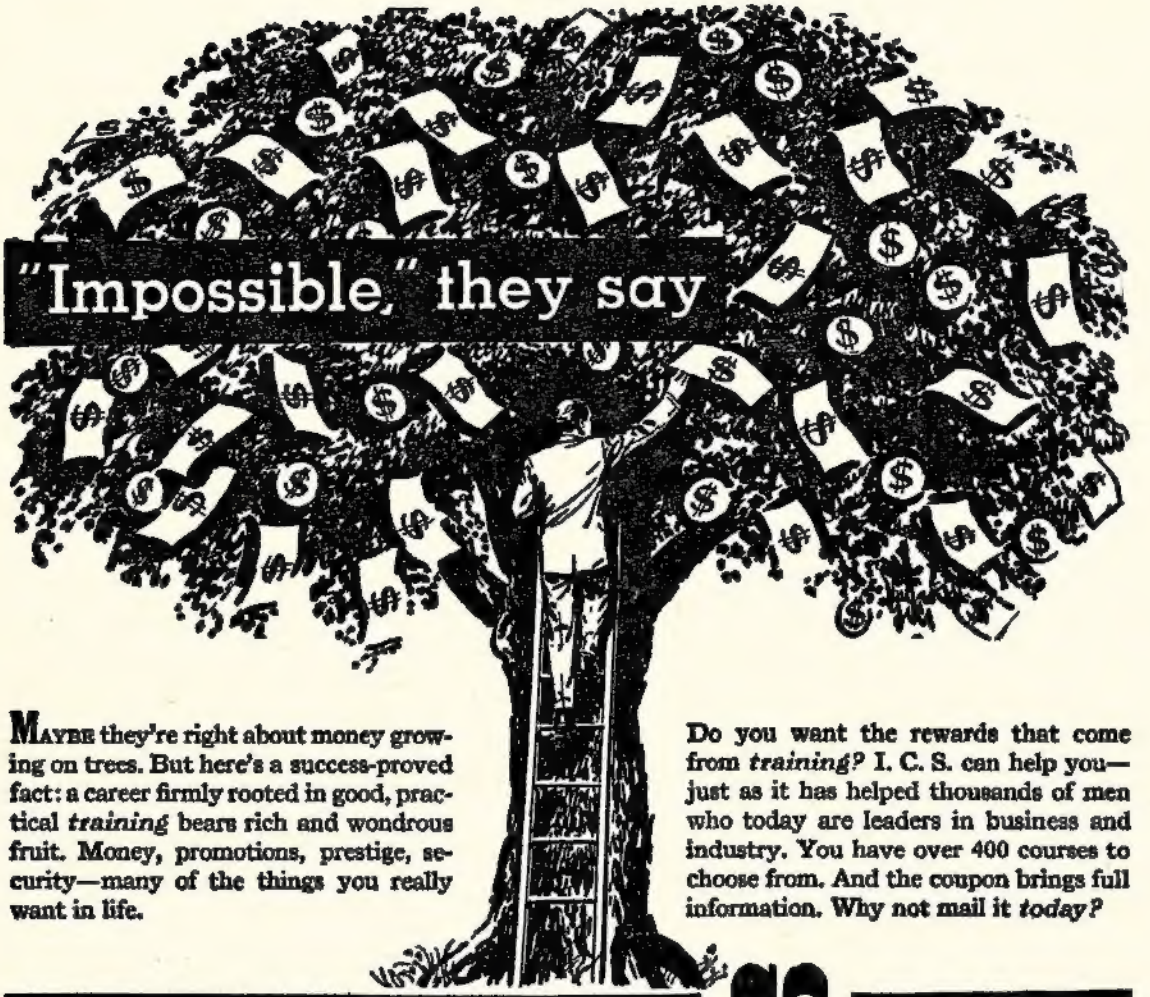

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Weird Tales

JANUARY, 1952 Cover by Jon Arfstrom

NOVELETTES

THE BLACK ISLAND . . . . . August Derleth 8
. . . which rose to the surface only at intervals, was unnamed, uncharted—the perfect abode of the Deep Ones.

OOZE . . . . . Anthony M. Rud 74
. . . if it got food enough in the swamp it could grow as big as the Masonic Temple.
(Copyright 1923 by Rural Publishing Company)

SHORT STORIES

LUCY COMES TO STAY . . . . . Robert Bloch 30
I knew why Lucy had run out on me that way; she knew they'd find me and call it "murder."

THE SEAMSTRESS . . . . . E. Everett Evans 34
No other village can boast a professional seamstress worth ten million dollars; dollars which carry a curse.

THE GUARD OF HONOR . . . . . Paul Suter 44
Something began calling him from far away, something remote, terrible. Through the corridors of sleep he advanced to meet it.
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LOVERS' MEETING . . . . . Harold Lawlor 55
Lots of elderly people retire to Florida. Who is to say in which incarnation they are now sojourning?

CAT'S CRADLE . . . . . E. W. Tomlinson 64
Could it be that the whipping cords of the bizarre design were themselves hypnotic?

THE IRON HANDS OF KATZAVEERE . . . . . David Eynon 68
The man had been strangled . . . by two right hands.

VERSE
CAT-EYES . . . . . Harriet A. Bradfield 64
NOT ALTOGETHER SLEEP:
Sonnet for the Psychoanalysts . . . . . Clark Ashton Smith 73

THE EYRIE 6

THE WEIRD TALES CLUB 95

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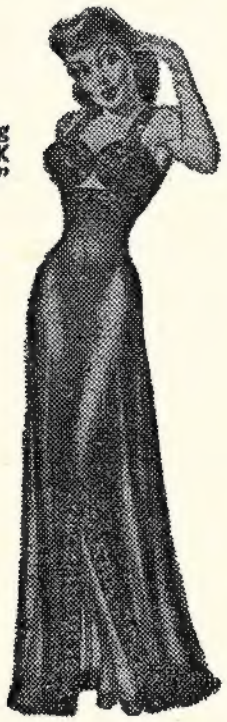
PRINTED IN THE U. S. A. Vol. 44, No. 2

D. McILWRAITH, *Editor*

Bewitching

She'll be your "Dream Girl" You'll "Bewitch" her with it



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The Magic of Mind

WERE the great personages of the past victims of a stupendous hoax? Could such eminent men of the ancient world as Socrates, Pericles, and Alexander the Great have been deluded and cast under the spell of witchcraft—or did the oracles whom they consulted actually possess *a mysterious faculty of foresight?* That *the human mind can truly exert an influence over things and conditions* was not a credulous belief of the ancients, but a known and demonstrable fact to them. That there exists a wealth of infinite knowledge just beyond the border of our daily thoughts, which can be aroused and commanded at will, was not a fantasy of these sages of antiquity, but a dependable aid to which they turned in time of need.

It is time you realized that the rites, rituals and practices of the ancients were not superstitions, but subterfuges to conceal the marvelous workings of natural law from those who would have misused them. Telepathy, projection of thought, the materializing of ideas into helpful realities, are no longer thought by intelligent persons to be impossible practices, but instead, *demonstrable sciences*, by which a greater life of happiness may be had.

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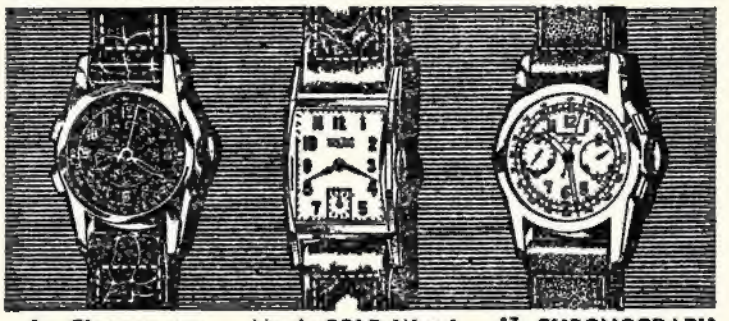

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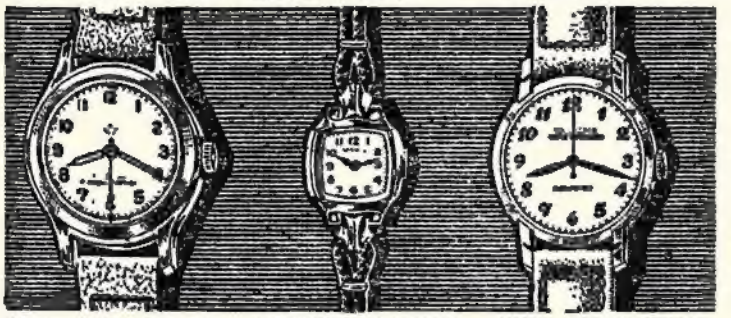

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THE EYRIE

The Editor, WEIRD TALES
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

At last this "haunting" of the newsstands is over. Herewith please find my one year's subscription to WEIRD TALES, *a magazine which has brought me fine entertainment for some twenty years.*

Please keep the spine-chilling stuff, the tales that turn blood into ice-water . . . the kind of story that makes you say: "Shucks, I know it can't be true, but still—? As for science fiction, I've read many fine pieces in WEIRD TALES, *but I believe there should be a weird note in WT's SF. That shouldn't be hard for any writer. The man in the street hearing of some of the latest developments of science often remarks, "Boy, that's weird!"*

Fred E. Ebel,
Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

The Editor, WEIRD TALES
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

Have just finished reading the November issue of WT, and want to let you know how much I enjoyed it. I was once an avid fan, but had not read an issue of your magazine for quite some time. Almost a year I believe. But this issue has started me all over again. For this issue I thought both of the novelettes quite good, although for sheer horror, "Pigeons from Hell" outdid "Hideaway", even without half trying. "When the Night Wind Howls", although entertaining, did not come up to the standard I have come to expect of de Camp and Pratt. The setting, of course, was quite familiar. Who is not familiar with Mr. Cohan and his customers? I thought "Fling the Dust Aside" rather interesting, and "The Bird" a bit unusual. Of the short stories, however, I thought "Was it Murder" and "The Brides of Baxter Creek" the best.

Letter departments are always interesting to me, and the Eyrie is no exception. I am in agreement with the groups preferring only fantasy. Not that I do not like Science Fiction—I love them, and enjoy the stf magazines thoroughly—but the fact is that fantasy, good fantasy, is hard to come by, and you do us a service by printing the better stories of this field. Incidentally, trying to think up new angles for fantasy, I thought up a little idea. Sometime back I found a stf limerick and put together a bit of a weird one. Here it is:

There was a young fellow named Jones
Who played on a harp made of bones
He launched into revels
With Vampires and Devils
To zombie and ghost overtones.

Reprints I do not find objectionable, as long as the character and quality of the stories merits repetition, but let's keep the quality up and keep WT up to its old standard as a fine fantasy magazine.

I am looking forward to the next issue, and wish you the best of everything, including continued success.

Sidney J. Espinache,
New Orleans, Louisiana.

(Continued on page 92)

Reducing Specialist Says:

LOSE WEIGHT Where It Shows Most REDUCE MOST ANY PART OF THE BODY WITH

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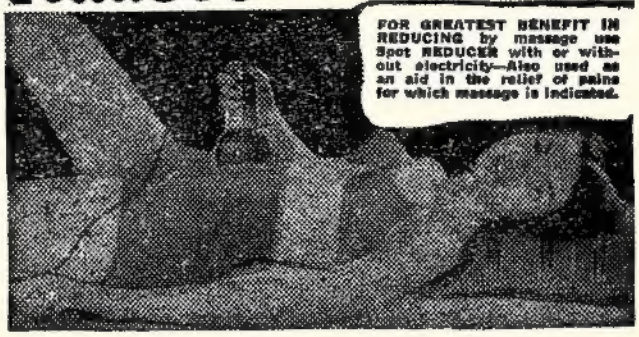

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SPOT REDUCER CO., Dept. E-794

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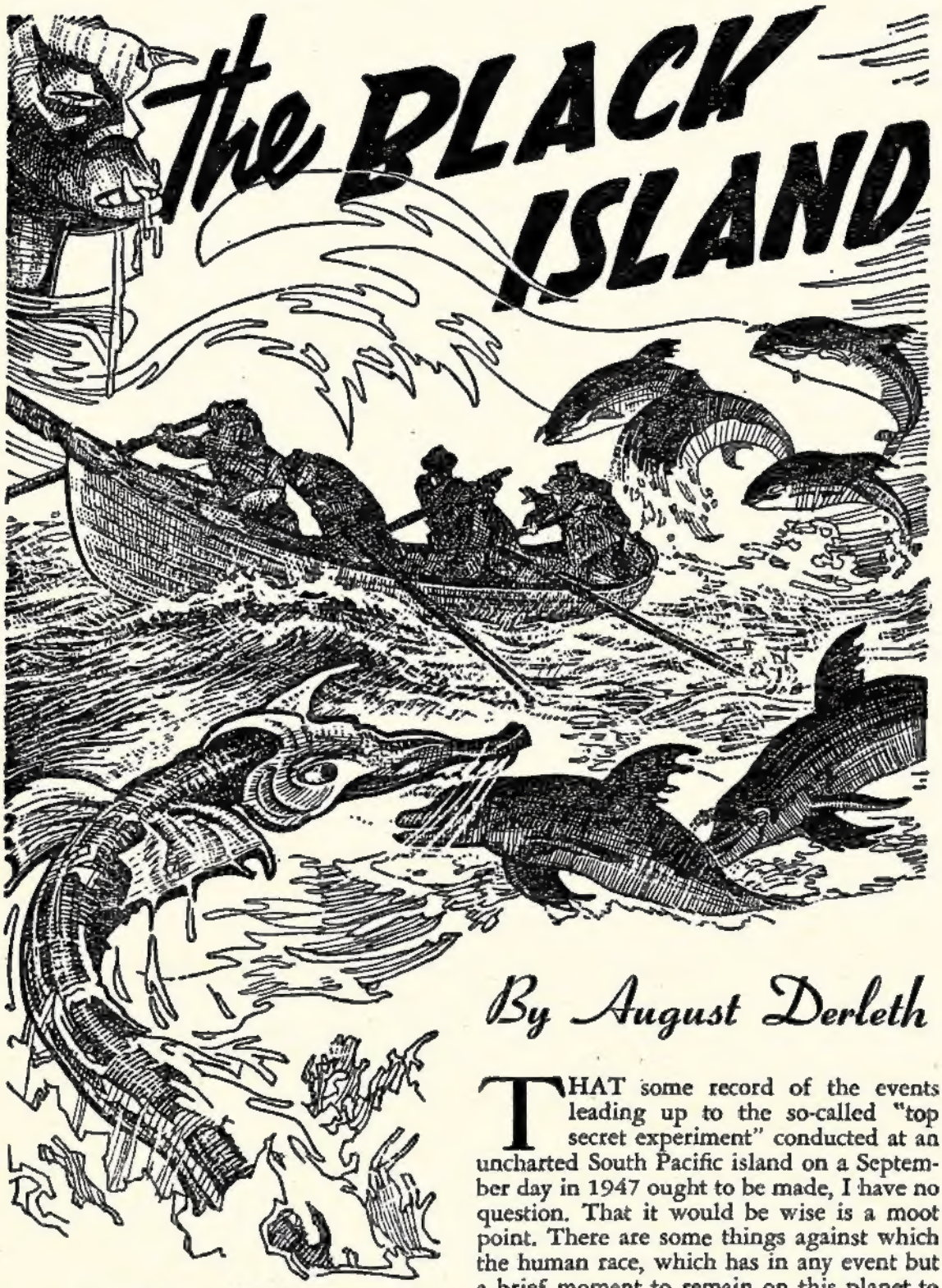
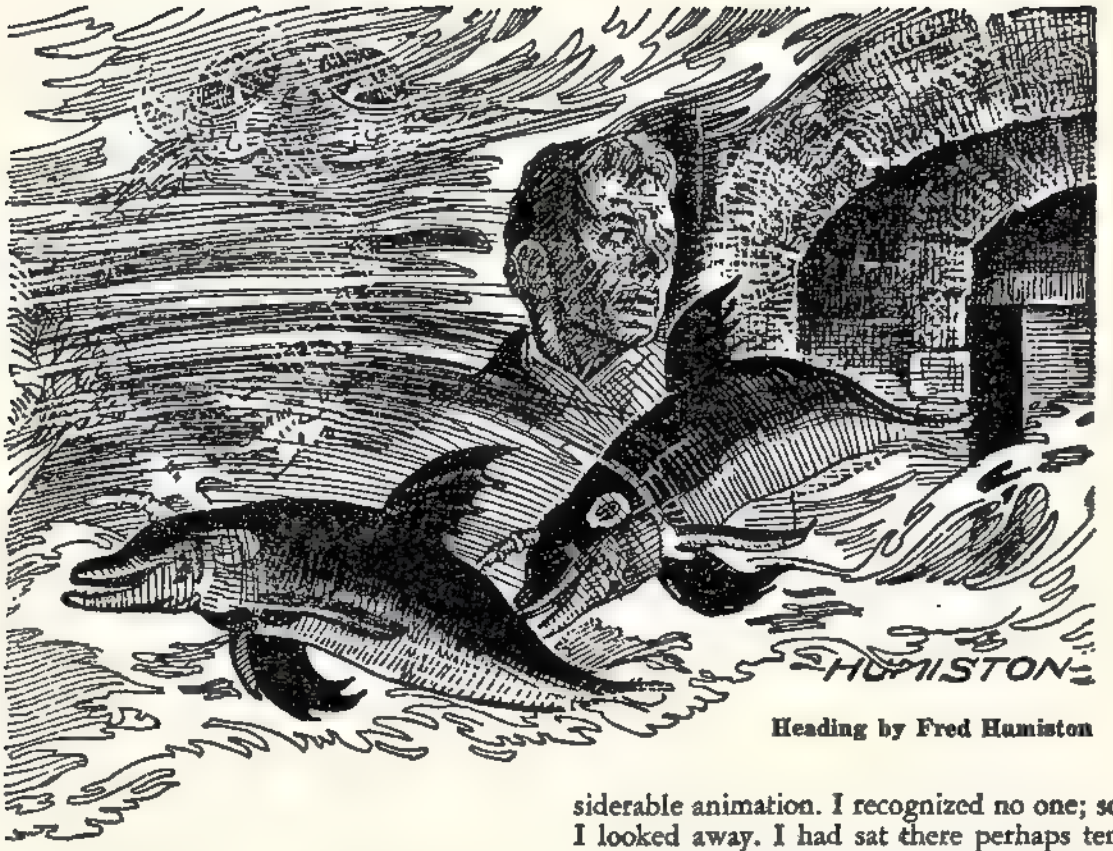


. . . flows in my veins the blood of the
Spawn of that black mating
of the South Pacific

By August Derleth

THAT some record of the events leading up to the so-called "top secret experiment" conducted at an uncharted South Pacific island on a September day in 1947 ought to be made, I have no question. That it would be wise is a moot point. There are some things against which the human race, which has in any event but a brief moment to remain on this planet to add to the brief moment of its previous existence, can be only inadequately forewarned and fore-armed; and, this being so,



Heading by Fred Humiston

it is conceivable that it would be better to remain silent and let one's fellowmen wait upon events.

In final analysis, however, there are judges far better qualified than I, and the progression of events both before and since that "experiment" have been so disturbing and so suggestive of incredibly ancient evil almost beyond man's grasp that I am compelled to make this record before time dims these events—if ever it could—or before my own obliteration, which is inevitable, and may, indeed, be nearer than I think.

The episode began prosaically enough in the most famous bar in the world, in Singapore . . .

I SAW the five gentlemen sitting together when first I came into the bar and sat down. I was not far from them, and alone, and I looked at them casually, thinking that someone I knew might be among them. An elderly man with dark glasses and a strangely impressive countenance, and four young men, in late twenties or early thirties, intent upon some discussion conducted with considerable animation. I recognized no one; so I looked away. I had sat there perhaps ten minutes, perhaps a little less; Henry Caravel had come up and spoken to me in passing, and we had taken note of the time together; he had just gone when I heard my name spoken.

"Perhaps Mr. Blayne could enlighten us?"

The voice was cordial, well-modulated, with a peculiar carrying power.

Looking up, I saw the five gentlemen at their table gazing toward me expectantly. At that instant, the old man stood.

"Our discussion is archeological in a sense, Mr. Blayne," he said directly. "If I may presume—I am Professor Laban Shrewsbury, a fellow American. Will you join us?"

I thanked him and, moved by a lively curiosity, went over to his table.

He introduced his companions—Andrew Phelan, Abel Keane, Claiborne Boyd, and Nayland Colum—and turned once more to me.

"Of course, we all know Horvarth Blayne. We have been following with keen interest your papers on Angkor-Vat and, with even more interest, your studies among the ruins of Ponape. It is no coincidence that we are

at the moment discussion the pantheon of Polynesian deities. Tell us, in your opinion, does the Polynesian sea-god, Tangaroa, have the same origin as Neptune?"

"Probably Hindu or Indo-Chinese in origin," I guessed.

"Those people are not primarily seafarers," said the professor promptly. "There is a concept older than those civilizations, even if we concede at once that the Polynesian civilization is much younger than those of the Asiatic continent which gave rise to them. No, we are not interested so much in their relations to other figures in the pantheon, as to the conceit which gave them being in the first place. And to its relation to so many batrachian or ichthyic figures and motifs which occur and recur in the art work, ancient and modern, to be found in the South Pacific islands."

I protested that I was not primarily an artist, and certainly could not presume to be a critic of art.

THE professor, brushed this aside with courteous detachment. "But you are familiar with art. And I wonder whether you can explain why the primitives of the South Pacific should emphasize the batrachian or ichthyic in their artifacts and arts, while the primitives of the North Pacific, for example, emphasize characteristics which are clearly avian. There are exceptions, of course; you will recognize them. The lizard figures of Easter Island and the batrachian pieces from Melanesia and Micronesia are common to these areas; the avian masks and headdresses of the North Pacific Indian tribes are common to the Canadian coast. But we find on occasion among those coastal Indian tribes disturbingly familiar motifs; consider, for instance, the markedly batrachian aspects of the shaman's headdress of the Haida tribe common to Prince of Wales Island and the ceremonial shark headdress of the Tlingit of Ketchikan, Alaska. The totems of the North Pacific Indians are primarily avian in concept, whereas such things as the ancestor figures carved into the tree-ferns of the New Hebrides quite clearly suggest aquatic dwellers."

I remarked that ancestor-worship was common to the Asiatic continent.

But this was not his principal thesis, which I recognized in the expectance with which his companions attended to him. He came to it presently. Apropos the sea-deities of primitive peoples, had I ever encountered in my archeological inquiries any of the legends pertaining to the mythological being, Cthulhu, whom he regarded as the progenitor of all sea-gods and the lesser deities connected with water as an element?

The comments he had made now fell into a distinct and well-knit pattern. Cthulhu, as the ancient god of water, the seas, a water elemental in a sense, must be considered as the primal deity of the South Pacific, while the avian motifs expressed in the artifacts and works of art common to the North Pacific derived from a worship of an air elemental rather than one of the sea. I was indeed familiar with the Cthulhu Mythos, with its remarkable lore in essence so familiar to the Christian Mythos of the expulsion of Sathanus and his followers and their ever-ceaseless attempts to reconquer heaven.

The mythos, as I recalled it while listening to the professor speak engagingly of Cthulhu, turned on a conflict between beings known as the Elder Gods, who presumably inhabited the cosmos many light-years away, and lesser beings called the Ancient Ones or the Great-Old Ones, who were presumably the motive forces of evil as opposed to those representing good, who were the benevolent Elder Gods. All had apparently existed in harmony at one time, but then a revolutionary attempt on the part of the Ancient Ones —who were Cthulhu, master of the waters; Hastur, who roamed the interplanetary spaces before his imprisonment in the dark Lake of Hali; Yog-Sothoth, most powerful of the Ancient Ones; Ithaqua, the god of the winds; Tsathoggua and Shub-Niggurath, gods of the earth and of fecundity; Nyarlathotep, their dread messenger; and others —resulted in their vanquishment and banishment to various places in the universe, from which they hoped to rise once more against the Elder Gods, and where they were served by their minions, cults of men and animals reared in their service. There were, additionally, pertaining to Cthulhu, supposedly inhabiting a secret place on Earth, rather shockingly suggestive legends that

certain of his batrachian followers, known as the Deep Ones, had mated with men and produced a horrible travesty of mankind known to be habitants of certain coastal Massachusetts towns.

MOREOVER, the Cthulhu Mythos had sprung from a collection of incredibly old manuscripts and similar sources purporting to be factual accounts, though nothing was adduced to prove them anything other than fiction of a highly skilled order; these manscripts and books—the *Necronomicon* of the mad Arab, Abdul Alhazred; the *Cultes des Goules,* the work of an eccentric French nobleman, the Count d'Erlette; the *Unaussprechlichen Kulten* of Von Junzt, a known aberrant who had roamed Europe and Asia in search of the remnants of old cults; the *Celeano Fragments;* the *R'lyeh Text;* the *Pnakotic Manuscript;* and the like —had been seized upon by writers of contemporary fiction and freely used as the source for incredible tales of fantasy and the macabre, and these had given a kind of aura of authenticity to what, at best, was a collection of lore and legends perhaps unique in the annals of mankind but surely little more.

"But you are skeptical, Mr. Blayne," observed the professor.

"I'm afraid I have the scientific mind," I answered.

"I rather think all of us here think similarly of ourselves," he said.

"Am I to understand that you believe in this volume of lore?"

He gazed at me disconcertingly from behind his dark spectacles. "Mr. Blayne, for more than three decades I have been on the trail of Cthulhu. Time after time I have believed that I have closed his avenues of ingress into our time; time after time I have been misled in thinking so."

"Then if you believe one aspect of the pantheon, you must believe all the rest," I countered.

"That is not necessarily so," he replied. "But there are wide areas of belief. I have seen and I know."

"I, too," said Phelan, and his supporting cry was echoed by the others.

The truly scientific mind is as hesitant to deprecate as it is to lend support. "Let us begin with the primal struggle between the Elder Gods and the Great Old Ones," I said cautiously. "What is the nature of your evidence?'

"The sources are almost infinite. Consider almost all the acient writings which speak of a great catastrophe which involved the earth. Look to the Old Testament, to the Battle of Beth-Horon, led by Joshua. 'And he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed . . .' Look to the *Annals of Cuauhtitlan* of the lore of the Nahua Indians of Mexico, which speak of an endless night, a tale verified by the Spanish priest, Fra. Bernadino de Sahagun, who, coming to the New World a generation after Columbus, told of the great catastrophe in which the sun rose but a little way over the horizon and then stood still, a catastrophe witnessed by the American Indians. And the Bible again: 'As they fled from before Israel . . . the Lord cast down great stones upon them in Azekah, and they died . . .' There are parallel accounts in other ancient manuscripts—the *Popul Vuh* of the Mayas, the Egyptian *Papyrus Ipuwer,* the Buddhist *Visuddhi-Magga,* the Persian *Zend-Avesta,* the Hindu *Vedas,* many another.

"There are curiously coincidental records left in acient art—the Venus Tablets of Babylon, found in the ruins of the library of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh, certain of the panoplies at Angkor-Vat, of which you must know—and there are the strangely altered clocks of ancient times—the water clock of the Temple of Amon at Karnak, now inaccurate for day and night; the shadow clock of Fayum, Egypt, inaccurate, too; the astronomical panel in the tomb of Senmut, in which the stars are shown in an order they do not have but which may presumably have been correct for Senmut's time. And these stars, I submit, are not just accidentally those of the Orion-Taurus group, held to be the seat of both the Elder Gods—who are believed to exist at or near Betelgueze—and at least on of the Ancient Ones, Hastur; and were presumably home to all the Ancient Ones. So that the catastrophe duly recorded in the old documents may very well have been evidence of the titanic battle

which was waged between the Elder Gods and the rebellious Ancient Ones."

I pointed out that there was a current theory concerning erratic conduct on the part of the planet now called Venus.

Professor Shrewsbury shrugged this away almost with impatience. "Entertaining, but pure nonsense. The concept of Venus as a one-time comet can be disproved scientifically; the concept of the conflict between the Elder Gods and the Ancient Ones cannot. I submit, Mr. Blayne, that your actual conviction of disbelief is not as strong as your words."

IN this he was eminently correct. What this strange old man had said had aroused and awakened a thousand latent memories, all of which now coalesced in the events of the moment. An archeologist cannot have seen the weird grotesques of Easter Island without a sense of an impending past; he cannot have looked upon Angkor-Vat or the shunned ruins of certain of the Marquesas Islands without a dim awareness of the terror that lurked in ancient places; he cannot have studied the legends of ancient peoples without recognizing that the lore of mankind, however exaggerated, takes root in some remote reality. Moreover, there was about my newly-found companions an air of gravity which was plain behind their good-nature, and was almost sinister without being malevolent. I could not doubt that these gentlemen were deadly serious, for each of them testified mutely that he had been on this quest for more than just a short time.

"You see," continued Professor Shrewsbury, "it would be folly to pretend that this meeting was an iccident. Your movements had been studied enough to make it occur. It is just possible that in your studies of ancient ruins and the drawings, hieroglyphics, and other remains found among them, you may have happened upon something which might afford us a clue to the place we seek."

"And what is that?" I asked.

"An island," So saying, he unfolded before me a crudely-drawn map.

I examined the map with interest which was quickened appreciably when it dawned upon me that this was no ordinary map done by the hand of an ill-informed person, but rather a map drawn by someone who clearly believed in the objects he drew; that these objects were not placed as he had placed them suggested an artist of centuries ago.

"Java and Borneo," I said, identifying them. "These islands are apparently the Carolines and the marked place is northward. But the directions are not very clear."

"Yes, that is its drawback," agreed Professor Shrewsbury dryly.

I looked at him sharply. "Where did you get this, Professor?"

"From a very old man."

"He must have been very old indeed," I agreed.

"Almost fifteen centuries," he answered, without a smile. "But, come, do you recognize this place beyond the Carolines?"

I shook my head.

"Then we fall back upon your own research, Mr. Blayne. You have been in the South Pacific ever since the end of the Second World War. You have gone from island to island, and you will have seen certainly that in some areas there is a marked emphasis on the batrachian motif, or the ichthyic motif—it matters little, save that we have reason to believe one island at least to be either the focal point or near the focal point of the occurence of artifacts and works or art stressing the batrachian."

"Ponape," I said.

He nodded, and the others waited expectantly.

"You see," he went on, "I have been to the Black Island which has no name and is uncharted because it is not always visible and rises to the surface only at rare intervals. But by means of travel was somewhat unorthodox, my attempt to blast the island and its horrible ruins was ineffective; we must find it again, and we shall find it most readily by picking up the trail of the batrachian motif in Polynesian art."

"There are certain legends," I put in, "which speak of a vanishing land. It would presumably be stationery?"

"Yes, making its appearance only when upheavals of the ocean's bed thrust it up. And then evidently not for long. I need not remind you that there have been recent temblors recorded by seismographs for the region of the South Pacific; conditions are

thus ideal for our quest. We are at liberty to suppose it to be part of a larger, submerged land area, quite possibly one of the legendary continents."

"Mu," said Phelan.

"If Mu existed," countered the professor gravely.

"There is ample evidence to believe it did," I said, "together with Atlantis. If you were to fall back upon your own kind of evidence, there is plenty of legendry to give the belief body—the Bible's story of the deluge, for instance; the ancient books' accounts of catastrophes, the submerging of vast land areas depicted in the drawings found at the sites of so much archeological discovery."

One of the professor's companions grinned and said, "You're entering into the spirit of it, Mr. Blayne."

The professor, however, gazed at me without smiling. "You believe in the existence of Mu, Mr. Blayne?"

"And presumably also in the ancient civilizations said to have inhabited Mu and Atlantis," he went on. "There are certain legends attributable to some such lost civilizations, Mr. Blayne—particularly in relation to their sea deities—and there are survivals of ancient worship in the Balearics, in the islands of the Carolines, at Innsmouth, Massachusetts, and in a few other widely separated areas. If Atlantis lay off the coast of Spain, and Mu near the Marshalls, presumably there might have been yet another land area at one time lying off the coast of Massachusetts. And the Black Island might be part of yet another land area; we cannot know. But it is certain that the Bible's Deluge and other similar legendary catastrophes might well have been evidencet of the titanic struggle which resulted in the banishment of Cthulhu to one of the lost continents of this planet."

I nodded, aware for what seemed the first time of the intense scrutiny of the others.

"The Black Island is thus far the only known avenue directly to Cthulhu, all others are primarily in the possession of the Deep Ones. We must therefore search for it by every means at our disposal."

It was at this point of our conversation that I became aware of a subtle force vying with my interest, which was far keener than I had permitted myself to show; it was a blind feeling of hostility, an awareness, as it were, of something malign in the very atmosphere. I looked from one to another of them, but there was nothing in their eyes save only an interest similar to my own. Yet the aura of fear, of enmity, was unmistakable, perhaps made all the more so by its very tenuousness. I looked past my companions, allowing my glance to travel along the bar, among the tables; I saw no one who was even aware of us, though the bar, as always, was crowded with people of all nationalities in all walks of life. The conviction of hostility, the aura of fear persisted, lying against my consciousness as were it a tangible thing.

I gave my attention again to Professor Shrewsbury. He talked now of the trail of Cthulhu through the arts and crafts of primitive peoples, and his words conjured up from my own memories a thousand corroborating details—of the crious figures found in the Sepik River valley of New Guinea; of the Tapa cloth designs of the Tonga islanders; of the hideously suggestive Fisherman's God of the Cook islanders, with its misshapen torso and its substitution of tentacles for legs and arms; of the stone *tiki* of the Marquesas, markedly batrachian in aspect; of the carvings of the New Zealand Maori, which depict creatures neither man nor octopus, neither fish nor frog, but something of all four; of the revolting war-shield design used by Queenslanders, a design of a labyrinth under water with a torturously malefic figure at the end of it, tentacles extended as if for prey; and the similar shell pendants of the Papuans; of the ceremonial music of the Indonesians, particularly the Batak dream music, and the Wayang shadow-play of leather puppets on ancient themes dramatizing a legend of sea-beings. All these pointed unmistakably to Ponape from one direction, which the ceremonial figures used in some parts of the Hawaiian Islands and the great heads of Rano-rarku on Easter Island made a similar indication from the other.

PONAPE, with its shunned ruins, its abandoned port in which the carvings are of unmistakable significance, carvings of brooding terror, of fish-men, of frog-men, of octopods, all speaking mutely of a strange and terrible way of life led by in-

habitants who were half-bestial, half-human. And from Ponape, where?

"You are thinking of Ponape," said Professor Shrewsbury quietly.

"Yes—and of what might lie beyond. If the Black Island is not between Ponape and Singapore, it must lie between that island and Easter Island."

"The only direction we have is that of the Johannsen narrative, discovered in Lovecraft, and subsequently repeated in the story of the disappearance of the H. M. S. *Advocate*. S. Latitude 47° 53′, W. Longitude 127° 37′. That would be in the general area. But the latitude and longitude may not be correct; according to the Greenbie account, that is the place at which the *Advocate* ran into a storm 'blowing something terrible'. There is thus a possibility of some error, since we have no way of knowing how far off course the ship may have been blown, nor how long a time elapsed since Greenbie last ascertained longitude and latitude. He makes note that they were steering 'a course straight for the Admiralties or New Guinea . . . but we saw by the stars that we were off course by west.'

"The Johannsen narrative . . ."

I interrupted him. "Forgive me, I am not familiar with these accounts."

"My apologies. Of course, you could not be. They are not vital to your knowledge, but exist only as curiously corroborative statements. Or rather, as statements which are extremely suggestive in the light of what we know. If one has no belief in Cthulhu and the pantheon of Elder Gods and Ancient Ones, such accounts are meaningless, and all too readily dismissed as hysteria; of one keeps an open mind, however, such accounts become damnably suggestive. One cannot dismiss them."

"These accounts apart, and all else, too," I said, "what do you expect of me?"

"I submit that you are perhaps more qualified to speak with authority on the arts and artifacts of the South Pacific than anyone else within the entire region. We are satisfied that the primitive drawings and sculptures of these people will point unmistakably to the approximate location of the Black Island. Specifically, we are interested in the occurence of any work similar to the Fisherman's God of Cook Island, which, we have reason to believe, is a representation, as seen by the primitive mind, of Cthulhu himself. By narrowing the circle of its incidence, it is logical to suppose that we can box in the site of the island."

I nodded thoughtfully, certain that I could almost effortlessly construct the ring that Professor Shrewsbury visualized.

"Can we count on you, Mr. Blayne?"

"More than that. If you have room for me, I'll join your party."

Professor Shrewsbury favored me with a long silent glance which I found somewhat disconcerting, but at last he said, "We have a place for you, Mr. Blayne. We hope to leave Singapore in two days." He gave me his card, writing rapidly on the back of it. "You will find me at this address if you need me."

I TOOK my leave of Professor Shrewsbury's party with curious misgivings. My offer to accompany them had been made almost involuntarily; I had had no intention of doing more than the professor had asked, but some impulse stronger than my own wish had impelled me instead to propose that I go with them to seek their goal. Once outside the bar, I asked myself why I had not doubted the professor's strange story; the evidence he had offered was purely circumstantial, and I could not have said that I had in fact ever come upon anything more to justify belief and yet I found myself believing readily not only in the existence of the Black Island, but also in the vast mythology so sketchily outlined for me, in all that pantheon of Elder Gods and Ancient Ones of which that oddly persuasive and yet curiously repellant old man in the black glasses had spoken. Moreover, I recognized that my belief stemmed from something more than Professor Shrewsbury's words; it arose from a deep inner conviction, as if I had known all this long before but had either refused to acknowledge it or had failed to become aware of it because the proper opportunity for recognition had never arisen.

And yet I had always been strengely stirred at sight of just such art as Professor Shrewsbury had hinted at, and most of all, at the Cook Islanders' horribly suggestive Fish-

erman's God. What Professor Shrewsbury had plainly intimated was that this work had had a living model; and of this I, despite my archeological training, had never entertained the shadow of a doubt. I could ask myself now to discover the reasons for my belief in the face of the previous record of dubeity I had established in my field; I could not answer, save to point to an inner conviction far stronger than any amount of cold rationalization. For it could not be denied that Professor Shrewsbury's analysis was not in itself factual, that the explanation for the various events and the nature of the evidence he projected were alike hypothetical in the extreme, that other solutions presented themselves as well, for the annals of primitive peoples are replete with many weird symbols and customs utterly unrelated to the living-patterns of contemporary man. But no challenge caused any waverings in my conviction. I knew, as if I had been there, that there was indeed an uncharted island near Ponape, that it was part of a sunken kingdom which might indeed have R'lyeh and part of Mu, that it was the course of an incredible power, and no rationalization could explain either my conviction or my complete refusal to consider any other explanation of the tentative outline Professor Shrewsbury had offered. He, too, knew; the facts he had aduced were but the tiniest fraction of the adducible evidence.

And what impulse was it that sent me into the shadows to wait upon the emergence of Professor Shrewsbury and his companions? I could not say; yet I remained in a place of concealment until the five men left the bar, watching them come out. I had no impulse to follow, but I knew as by intuition that they would not be unattended, and they were not. Their followers walked at a respectable distance behind them—one, a second, yet another, at widely separated intervals.

I stepped out and faced one of them. He met my eyes questiongly for a moment, held my gaze, and looked away. A lascar, I judged him, but oddly deformed, with a curiously suggestive head, foreshortened, with little brow, and repellantly wide-mouted, with scarcely a chin at all, but a sloping fold of skin that vanished into his neck. And his skin, too, was rough, wart. I felt no horror, looking at him. Perhaps Professor Shrewsbury's hints had prepared me for such an apparition, for I had known someone would be there. I was equally certain, however, that, for the present at least, my newly-found friends were in no danger.

I TOOK myself off to my quarters presently, very thoughtful and preoccupied, for there was manifestly something more than Professor Shrewsbury's story and the quest of the five for the mythological Cthulhu to stir me. Once at my rooms, I found myself drawn to the packet of papers which had come down to me from my grandfather Waite—for my name had not always been Blayne, having undergone a change in the home of my foster-parents in Boston—my grandfather Asaph Waite, whom I had never consciously seen, and who perished with my grandmother, my father, and my mother in a disaster which had struck their town when I was yet only a babe in arms, and while I was on a visit with cousins in Boston who had forthwith adopted me after a loss which, to any other older child, would have been shockingly tragic.

My grandfather's papers were wrapped in oilskin—he had been a seafaring man out of Massachusetts, at one time an agent of the famous Marsh family, which for generations had been seafaring men, ranging far and wide over the face of the earth—and I had had them with me for years. I had examined the small packet from time to time, with curious stirrings and misgivings; tonight something Professor Shrewsbury had said had brought the papers back into my memory, and I wanted to look at them once more, without delay.

They consisted of fragments of an old diary—some pages had been torn out here and there; of fragmentary letters, a few documents, and some of what purported to be my grandfather's own writings entitled simply: *Invocations,* though down in one corner someone had added: *to Dagon.* The *Invocations* came to hand first. These were evidently intended as at least semi-poetry, and were writen in a manner at times incoherent, at others apparently incoherent—unless, as I was now prepared to admit, I lacked the proper key to understanding. I

read but one of them, with considerable more care, however, than I had previously given it.

By all the depths of Y'ha—nthlei—and the dwellers thereof, for the One Over All;

By the Sign of Kish—and all who obey it, for its Author;

By the Door to Yhe—and all who use it, who have gone before and who shall come after, for Him to Whom It Leadeth;

By Him Who Is To Come . . .

"Ph'nglui mglw-nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah-nagl fhtagn."

I recognized in the final incomprehensible line, two of the names Dr. Shrewsbury had used, and I was even more disquieted than ever to discover them here in my possession, even if I had come by them in so casual a fashion.

I turned next to the diary, which was evidently, judging by notes pertinent to events of the day in the United States, for 1928. The entries were not frequent, but it was noteworthy that, after a beginning in which my grandfather had chronicled, journal-fashion, comments on the political and historical events of his time, his attention turned ever more and more to something mysterious and personal, to which the diary afforded no key. The entries pertinent to something which troubled my grandfather exceedingly began in late April of that year.

April 23. Out to D. R. again last night, where saw what M. affirms is Him. Amorphous, tentacled, inhuman. Could I have expected other? M. extremely excited. Cannot say that I shared his excitement except that I found myself vaccilating between M.'s extreme on the one hand and an equal extremity of aversion on the other. A stormy night. Do not know where all this will lead.

April 24. Took note of many boat losses in last night's storm. But none from here, though many were to D. R. So evidently we have been protected for another purpose which will be made plain in good time. Met M. on the street today; he took no notice of me, as if he did not know who I was. I understand now why he constantly wears the black gloves. If those who do not understand should *see*!

April 27. A stranger in town, questioning old Zadok. The word has gone around that Z. will have to be dealt with. A pity. He seemed always such a harmless, garrulous old tosspot. Too garrulous, perhaps. But no one has heard him say anything. The stranger, they say, plied him with liquor.

There were similar entries, and other accounts of strange journeys to the place given only as D. R., evidently to be reached only by water—the Atlantic—but not far from the settlement, for there was no account of lengthy traveling over water to reach the goal from the town. These entries varied in intensity, but became steadily more and more choatic; evidently the town had been seriously disturbed by the prying questions of a strange visitor to that clannish community. By late May, he was writing:

May 21. Word passed around that a "Federal Man" was asking questions in town today. Visited M.'s Refining Company. I have not seen him myself, but Obed mentioned seeing him. A short wiry man, very dark-skinned. A Southerner, perhaps. He supposedly comes directly from Washington. M. cancelled the meeting tonight, and also a trip to D. R. Leopold was to have gone as the s. tonight. Now he will be passed over and the next one will be chosen.

May 22. The sea very turbulent last night. Anger at D. R.? The trip should not have been postponed.

May 23. Rumors grow. Gilman reported seeing a destroyer in the vicinity of D. R. last evening, but no one else saw it. Gilman entirely too imaginative. Should be disciplined for adding to the growing discontent.

May 27. Something wrong. More strangers in town. Also ships off the coast, apparently armed. The docks being examined by these tightlipped outsiders. Are they in reality Federal Men, or are they others—from H., for instance? How could we know? I have suggested it to M.

but he says, no, they cannot be, he would "feel" it if so. M. does not appear to be disturbed, but he is not entirely at his ease. Everyone is running to him.

June. Z. has been taken care of, right under the noses of the Federal Men. What can they want? I am prevailing on J. to send the child off to Martha."

It was to this period of the diary to which one of the letters belonged; recognizing it, I had placed the letter to my foster-mother between the pages of the diary at this point; and I now opened it and read it once more.

7th June 1928

Dear Martha,

I write in considerable haste because we have had to make decisions in a hurry here these past few days. Events have turned up so that it would be best to send Horvath to you for safekeeping. John and Abigail have agreed, however reluctantly; so I send him with Amos. It might be best to keep Amos with him for a week or two, until he can accustom himself to you and your way of existence there in Boston. Then Amos may come again, though I do not need him at present, and if you have use for him, by all means retain him until it is convenient for you to send him back to us.

Ever affectionately,
Asaph Waite.

Comparatively few entries remained in the diary, and all were undated, appearing simply under "June". They were increasingly disturbed, betraying what must have been my grandfather's extreme agitation.

June. M. reports questions very upsetting. Bear directly on D. R. and the "goings-on" there. Someone must have talked to the Federal Men. But who? If M. only knew, he would follow Z. There is no room for traitors, and whoever it is will be hunted down and destroyed. And not only him alone, but all who are with him or who support him, including, if he is married, his wife and family.

June. Questions about the "rites" at Dagon Hall. Whoever talked *knows.*

June. Large-scale operations at the docks. A destroyer out at D. R. Wild talk of government taking control of situation.

June. It is true. Blasting begun, and fires have started to spread up from the docks. They will go out of control. Some have taken to the water, but the fire is cutting others off unless they go out of town and around it . . ."

Reading these entries again, I found myself more disturbed than ever. The nature of the catastrophe which overtook my progenitors was still not clear. They might have been caught in the fires which followed the inexplicable "blasting"; they might have become involved in the blastings themselves. Whatever happened, the events which took place in that Massachusetts town had occurred in 1928; in that same year my parents and my grandparents had been killed in an unnamed catastrophe; it was not unwarranted to presume that these events were connected. The entries in my grandfather's diary actually revealed nothing save that some enterprise with which he was connected, evidently led by the man M., had attracted the attention of Federal agents who had invaded the town and taken corrective measures. There was no hint as to their nature but presumably it was illegal, for nothing was set down in my grandfather's papers to identify it.

The remaining letters—there were but two others—were written also in June, 1928. One was to my foster-parents.

10th June 1928.

Dear Martha and Arvold,

I have forwarded by mail out of Arkham a copy of my last will and testament, should anything happen to me, putting you down as executors and administrators of the trust fund I shall leave to Horvath. Apart from such fees as are set forth for you in the nature of a bequest, I have left all my property to my son and daughter-in-law, but in the event of their death, to Horvath. I hope I am not too pessimistic, but I do not believe in being inexcusably sanguine. The events of the past few days are not encouraging.

As always,
Asaph.

The second letter was undated, but by its nature, it must have been written in June also; it was not an original, as were those to my foster-parents, but a copy my grandfather had evidently retained.

Dear W.,
A hasty note to let you know M. thinks all is lost for the present. He does not think damage can be done to Y'ha., but none of us knows. The place swarms with Federal Men. We think now it is all Zadok's doing, but Z. has been taken care of. We do not know who it was he talked to, but have reason to believe it was one of us. He will not escape. Though he was pursued up the tracks out of town and got away, he will be forever haunted by what he has done. Of course, you may say, as some have said, it would never have happened if the Marshes had kept away from those strange creatures at P., but the South Pacific is a long way from Massachusetts, and who would guess that they could make their way here to the reef. I am afraid now we are all getting what people call "the Marsh look." It is not attractive. I shall write no more, but adjure you, if anything happens to us,—and that may be, for this thing has so impressed the Federal Men that there is no semblance of a trial here for anyone or any place they elect to destroy—do what you can for my grandson, Horwath Waite, whom you will find in the care of Mr. and Mrs. Arvold W. Blayne, in Boston.
Asaph.

These were the reactions of my grandfather Waite attendant upon the catastrophe which struck at his town and at him and his family in that summer of 1928. I had read these papers before, but never with such fascination. Perhaps it was the knowledge of these, which lay in memory, which accounted for my interest in the project which occupied Professor Shrewsbury. And yet I could not wholly believe that it was. Together with the conviction that within the boundaries of Professor Shrewsbury's quest lay the solution to the mystery which had dogged my grandfather was a haunting memory which loomed forever just on the perimeter of recognition, and it was this, however nameless and faceless, which motivated my deeper and more troubled concern with the trail of Cthulhu, for which I was about to surrender for the time being at least all my archeological research, my hopes and ambitions for my future in the field I had chosen for my own. The compulsion was stronger than my wish.

I PUT my grandfather's papers away once more wrapping them in the oilskin in which they had come to my foster-parents, and then, far from tired, I set about to track down, even as Professor Shrewsbury had asked, the occurrence of certain hideously suggestive motifs in the art patterns of the South Pacific islanders, particularly the Fisherman's God of Cook Island. At this I worked steadily for more than two hours, consulting not only such references as I owned, but also my own voluminous notes and sketches. At the end of that time I realized that the Fisherman's God had made its appearance in one form or another as far to the south as Australia, as far to the north as the Kuriles, and between, in Cambodia, Indo-China, Siam, and the Malay States; but I had affirmed also, as I had already foreseen, that the incidence of its occurence was immeasurably greater in the vicinity of Ponape. However the circle were drawn, its center would be at or near Ponape; that the object of Professor Shrewsbury's quest lay in the immediate vicinity I had not a shred of doubt.

And that something inconceivably malign lay there in that hidden place, I had also no doubt. For it was from Ponape that the M. of my grandfather Waite's papers had come home, bringing in his aftermath the events which were to culminate in the tragedy of 1928. The recurrence of the island in the legends and corroborative accounts pertinent thereto was not an accident or chance; Ponape was the outpost of mankind's civilization, the outpost nearest the gate into the weird and terrible world of the Ancient Ones, of whom great Cthulhu alone lay forever sleeping, waiting upon the events which would some day rouse him from his centuries-old torpor and send him forth once more upon the unsuspecting peoples of

the earth, forth to conquer and bring all the planet under his dominion.

III

WE shipped for Ponape on the second day, traveling by one of the regular steamers plying the islands. I had thought we were to have possession of a ship of our own, but Professor Shrewsbury offered in explanation that other arrangements had been made out of Ponape. We gathered together on the deck soon after leaving the docks, primarily for the purpose of comparing notes, and I discovered that all of them spoke most matter-of-factly of being under surveillance in Singapore.

"And you," Professor Shrewsbury turned to me. "Were you aware of being followed, Mr. Blayne?"

I shook my head. "But I had thought someone trailed after you," I admitted. "Who were they?"

"The Deep Ones," offered Phelan. "They are everywhere, but we've had other followers far more dangerous. The star protects us from them; they cannot harm us as long as we carry it."

"I have one for you, Mr. Blayne," said Professor Shrewsbury.

"Who are the Deep Ones?" I asked.

Professor Shrewsbury offered an immediate explanation. The Deep Ones, he said, were minions of Cthulhu. Originally they had been aquatic only—hideously suggestive of human beings, but essentially batrachian or ichthyic; but over a century ago certain American traders had come into the South Pacific and had formed alliances with the Deep Ones, mating with them and thus producing a hybrid breed which could exist equally well on land or in the sea; it was this hybrid breed which was to be found in most of the port cities of the world, never very far from water. That they were directed by some sort of super-intelligence from the sea seemed unquestionable, since they were never long in discovering any member of Professor Shrewsbury's party, all of whom had had previous encounters with the followers of Cthulhu—and, indeed, with certain minions of others of the Ancient Ones.

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Their purpose was clearly menacing, but the power of the five-pointed star, which was sealed with the seal of the Elder Gods, rendered them impotent. Should anyone of them fail to carry the star, however, he might fall victim to the Deep Ones, or to the Abominable Mi-Go, or to the Tcho-Tcho people, the Shoggoths, the Shantaks, or any among a score or more of those human and semi-human creatures dedicated to the service of the Ancient Ones.

Professor Shrewsbury excused himself to go to his cabin and bring me the star of which he had spoken. It was a rough-surfaced stone, gray in color, with a barely distinguishable seal representing a pillar of light, as closely as I could approximate it. It was not large; it scarcely covered my palm, but it had a most peculiar effect on me, for it felt as if it burned my flesh, and I found it curiously repellent. I put it into my pocket, and there it seemed incredibly heavy; there, too, it left a burning sensation on my skin, despite the clothing between; it did not appear to have a similar effect on the others, as far as I could ascertain. Indeed, it became so heavy, presently and afflicted me so sorely with the sensation of heat, that I found it necessary to excuse myself and hasten to my cabin so that I could remove the stone from my person and leave it among my possessions.

Only then did I feel free to rejoin my companions, where I took a listener's part in their discussion of events beyond my ken—not alone of Cthulhu and Hastur, and their minions, or of the others, not alone of the Elder Gods and that titanic battle which must have taken place aeons ago and involved countless universes, but of certain adventures these five had shared together, for they made countless references to ancient tablets, to books which, to judge by the dates which occurred in their conversation, had been made long before mankind had learned to write even on papyrus. They spoke repeatedly, too, of a "library" on "Celeano", which was beyond my ken. I was loath to ask, but I gathered that they had undergone a period of exile at what must have been certainly an archeologically priceless retreat, a city or library at a place called "Celeano", of which I knew nothing and was reluctant to admit ignorance of a site so archeologically ancient under a name I had hitherto associated only with the stars.

Their references to the Ancient Ones intimated, too, of feuds among these beings, between Hastur and Cthugha on the one hand, and Cthulhu and Ithaqua on the other; evidently these beings were united only against the Elder Gods, but vied with one another for the worship of their minions and the destruction or seduction of such inhabitants of their regions as came within their orbits. I gathered, too, that Professor Shrewsbury and his companions had been drawn together often by mere chance, that all had been exposed to similar dangers, and all had eventually sought the haven which the professor had discovered many years before. It was somewhat disquieting, too, to reflect upon certain casual references made by the Professor to events in which he had a part but which had taken place much longer ago than could have been possible, considering his age; but I concluded, finally, that I must have been in error and misunderstood.

That night I had the first of the curiously disturbing dreams which haunted our voyage. Though I slept soundly enough, I was never free of dreams. I dreamed that night that I had found myself in a great city deep in the sea. My subaqueous existence did not trouble me; I was able to breathe, move about as I pleased, and carry on a normal existence in the ocean's depths. The city, however, was not a modern city; it was ancient—quite possibly such a city as might have been visualized by an archeologist—far more ancient than any I had ever known before, with vast, monolithic buildings, on the walls of many of which had been emblazoned representations of the sun, the moon, the stars, and certain grotesquely horrible figments of the artist's imagination, some of them amazingly similar to the Fisherman's God of the Cook Islanders. Moreover, some of the buildings featured doorways of an unusual size, both in width and height, as were they constructed for being beyond the conception of mankind.

I moved about among the city's streets and lanes unmolested, but I was not alone. Other human or semi-human beings became

visible from time to time, most of them strangely batrachian in their aspects and movements, and my own locomotion was rather more batrachian than human. I saw presently that all the inhabitants were moving in one general direction, and I followed in their wake, joining the stream. Thus I came presently to a rise in the sea-bottom, at the top of which stood a ruined building which was clearly a temple. The building was of black stone, of pieces suggesting the Egyptian pyramids; it was no longer intact, but had fallen away, disclosing beyond the great doorway a passage which struck downward, into the sea-bottom. Around this doorway, in a semicircle, clustered the denizens of that ocean depth, I among them, waiting upon some event which was foreordained.

I GREW aware of a chanting ululation rising from among them, but I could distinguish no words, for the language was not one I knew. Yet I had the conviction that I should know it, and several of the strange beings near me stared at me in a peculiarly revolting way, accusingly, as if I were guilty of some breach of conduct. But their attention was soon drawn away from me to that ruined doorway. Even while others were still joining the throng from the city below, a kind of glow began to come into being in the doorway, an oddly diffused light, not white or yellow, but pale green, lambent, like the movement of the curtain auroras, deepening in intensity as the moments passed. Then, deep in the heart of the passage, rising out of the light, came a great amorphous mass of flesh, preceded by incredibly long, lashing tentacles, a thing with the head of what might have been a gigantic human being in its upper half, and an octopoid creature below.

I caught but a single, horrified glimpse of it; then I screamed aloud and woke.

I lay for some time trying to ascertain the reason for being of the dream I had had. That it grew from my knowledge of the ancient legends, I could not doubt; but how could I account for my perspective in the dream? I was not an interloper, as I was in fact, on my way to discover the point of

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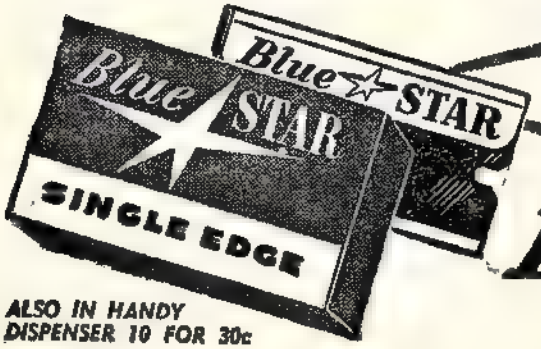

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egress for Cthulhu. Moreover, I was a witness to something more than was set down in any of the references or sources I had read, and nothing of what I had dreamed had been envisioned in anything Professor Shrewsbury had said.

But I puzzled over this problem in vain. The only explanation I could credit lay in the work of a perfervid imagination, which might conceivably have conjured up the substance of my dream. Lulled by the smooth movement of the ship, I drifted off into sleep once more, and again into dream.

This time, however, the setting was far different. I dreamed that I was a spectator at cataclysmic events far out among the constellations and galaxies. There a great battle was joined between beings far beyond the conceptions of a mere human being. They were great, constantly changing, masses of what appeared to be pure light—sometimes in the form of pillars, sometimes as great globes, sometimes as clouds; these masses struggled titanically with other masses likewise constantly changing not only in intensity and shape, but also in color. Their size was monstrous; compared to them, I had the size of an ant to a dinosaur. The battle raged in space, and from time to time one of the opponents of the pillars of light would be caught up and flung far outward, dwindling to the sight, and altering hideously in shape, taking on the aspect of a solid, fleshly form, yet undergoing unceasing metamorphosis.

Suddenly, in the midst of this interesting engagement, it was as if a curtain had been drawn across the scene; it faded away abruptly, and slowly another took its place, or, rather a succession of scenes—a strange, black-watered lake, lost among crags in an utterly alien landscape, certainly not terrestrial, with a boiling, churning disturbance in the water and the raising of a thing too hideous to be named; a bleak, dark, windswept landscape with snow-covered crags ringing in a great plateau, in the center of which rose a black structure suggesting a many-turretted castle, within which sat enthroned a quartet of sombre beings in the guise of men, attended by huge-bat-winged birds; a sea-kingdom, a far cry from Carcassone, similar to that of which I had previously dreamed; a snowy landscape, suggestive of Canadian regions, with a great shape striding across it, as on the wind, blotting out the stars, showing in their place great shining eyes, a grotesque caricature on mankind in the Arctic wastes.

These scenes passed before my eyes in dream with ever-increasing rapidity, and only one was remotely recognizable: a sea-coast town which, I was confident, was in Massachusetts or at least somewhere along the New England coast, and there I saw, moving about in its streets, people I remembered having seen far back in memory—particularly the always heavily veiled figure of the woman who had been my mother.

THE dream ended at last. I woke again, far from sleep now, filled with a thousand perplexing questions, unable to know the meaning and significance of what I had seen in dream, the kaleidoscope of events utterly beyond my ken. I lay trying to thread them together, to evoke or create a common link; I could find nothing save the nebulous mythology of which Professor Shrewsbury had spoken in only the most superficial way.

I rose presently and went out on deck. The night was calm, a moon shone, the ship moved steadily through the South Pacific toward our goal. The hour was late, past midnight, and I stood at the rail watching the passing scene—the stars, wondering where, if any place, life such as mankind knew it existed; the sea, with the moonlight glinting and gleaming on the gently swelling water, wondering whether, indeed, there had ever existed the legendary sunken continents, whether cities had sunk beneath the sea's surface in ages gone by, and what denizens of the deep lurked in those depths as yet unknown to man.

Presently, however, the sound of our passage began to have a peculiarly illusory effect, and at the same time I was given to imagining that dark shapes swam with the ship, alongside, shapes in the guise, however distorted, of human beings; it seemed to my already overwrought mind that the very water seemed to whisper my name: *Horvath Blayne! Horvath Blayne!* over and over, and it was then as if a dozen voices whispered back: *Horvath Waite; Horvath Waite!*, until

at last I was overcome by the conviction that I should turn back, go away, return to my ancestral home, as if I did not know that it had been destroyed in the holocaust of 1928. So overpoweringly suggestive did this illusion become, that I turned at last and sought the comparative peace of my cabin, where I took once again to my berth, hoping this time for sleep undisturbed by any dream.

Then at last I slept.

IV

ON our arrival at Ponape, our party was met by a grim-visaged American naval official in white uniform, who drew Professor Shrewsbury to one side and spoke briefly with him, while we waited, together with a shabby-looking seaman who seemed also to desire some words with the professor. This seaman presently caught the professor's eye; certainly Professor Shrewsbury did not resent the seaman's familiarity, and within a few moments he was walking at the professor's side, talking animatedly in a dialect I did not clearly understand.

The professor listened to him but a short while. Then he halted our party and abruptly altered our immediate plans.

"Phelan and Blayne, come along with me. The rest of you go to our quarters. Keane, send for Brigadier-General Holberg, and ask him to see me."

Phelan and I therefore accompanied Professor Shrewsbury and his rough companion, who led the way through devious streets and lanes to a building which was assuredly little more than a hovel. Lying on a pallet there, another seaman awaited us. Both men had evidently had foreknowledge of our arrival, for the professor had sent ahead months ago for any lore of a mysterious island which rose on occasion and vanished as strangely. It was manifestly such knowledge as the ailing seaman wished now to impart.

His name was Satsume Sereke; he was of Japanese extraction, but clearly of mixed blood, and of more than usual education. He was approaching middle age, but looked older. He had been a hand on a tramp steamer, the *Yokohama*, out of Hongkong; the steamer had been wrecked and he had been one of the men in a lifeboat. Before permitting him to go farther, Professor Shrewsbury now asked us to take careful note of what Sereke said. The account I set down differed in no detail from Phelan's. We made no attempt, of course, to reproduce the exact language of the ailing man.

"Our course was for Ponape. Bailey had a compass, and so we knew about where we were going. The first night after the storm we were moving along all right—Henderson and Melik were at the oars, with Spolito and Yohira—it was clear, we had enough food and water, nobody dreaming anything. I mean—we saw something in the water. We thought it was sharks or porpoises, maybe marlins, we couldn't see well enough. It was dark, and they stayed away from the boat, just followed us and went along with us. Along about my watch, they came closer. They had a funny look, like they had arms and legs instead of fins and a tail, but they were up and down so much you couldn't be sure. Then, quicker than a cat, something reached over into the boat and got Spolito—just pulled him out; he screamed, and Melik reached out for him, but he was gone before Melik could get to him. Melik said he saw something like a webbed hand; he was near crazy with fear afterward; Spolito just went down and never came up again. All our followers were gone quick; then they came back, an hour later, and that time they got Yohira the same way. After that nothing more, and when morning came we saw the island.

"It was an island, where none was before. There was nothing growing on it, and it was black with muck, I think. But there were remains of buildings on it, buildings like I never saw before, with big, odd-shaped blocks of stone. There was an open door, very large, partly broken away. Henderson had the glasses, and he got a good look. Then he passed them around. Henderson wanted to go to the place, but I didn't. Well, he talked, and Mason, Melik, and Gunders decided to go ashore; Benton and I held back, and the way we settled it was we rowed over, and Benton and I stayed in the boat with the glasses to watch the others.

"They got out and sloshed through the

muck and seaweed to the stones, and then they went on to that doorway. All four of them were there, and I was looking at them through the glasses. I don't know how it happened, but something big and black just puffed out of that doorway and fell on the four of them. It pulled back with a horrible sucking noise, but Henderson and Mason and the others were gone. Benton had seen it, too, but not as clear. I didn't go to look, I didn't want to see any more. We rowed as fast as we could and got away from there. We never stopped rowing until the freighter *Rhineland* picked us up."

"Did you set down the latitude and longitude of the island?" asked Professor Shrewsbury.

"No. But we lost the ship at about South Latitude 49° 51′, West Longitude 128° 34′. It is toward Ponape from there, but not close to Ponape."

"You saw this thing in the morning, by daylight?"

"Yes, but there were fogs—green fogs; it was not clear."

"How far out of Ponape?"

"Perhaps a day."

PROFESSOR SHREWSBURY succeeded in establishing no more. Nevertheless, he appeared pleased; he paused only long enough to ascertain that Sereke would recover from the shock and exhaustion which gripped him; then he returned to the quarters he had arranged for us.

There we found Brigadier-General Holberg, a grim, gray-haired man of approximately sixty, waiting for us. Immediately after introductions had been exchanged, he came to the subject of his presence and his reason for it.

"I have been told to place myself at your disposal, Professor Shrewsbury, by an authority I cannot very well disregard." He smiled frostily. "Operation Ponape is apparently your personal project, sir."

"You have been given some of the documents to read, surely?"

"I have read the documents, yes. I have no comments to make. This is your field, not mine. I have a destroyer ready for your use as soon as you wish to come aboard. A carrier is within call, and the weapon is in readiness, subject to my order. I understand you will attempt destruction with other weapons first?"

"That is the plan, yes."

"When do you expect to leave Ponape, sir?"

"Within a week, General."

"Very good. We shall be at your disposal."

THE events of that week on Ponape were essentially trivial, concerning primarily the amassing of powerful explosive weapons for use on the Black Island, if indeed we could find that uncharted land area. But behind these superficial tasks loomed something profoundly disturbing. It was not alone the undeniable fact that we were under surveillance; we had come to expect that. It was not only that we were constantly aware of an impending task of singular magnitude; this too was to be expected. No, it was something more, it was the consciousness of the proximity of a vast and primeval power, which gave off a malignance almost tangible. All of us felt this; I alone felt something more.

Yet I could not define the intangible fear under which I labored. It was far more than fear of the evil that lurked in the sea off Ponape; it was something that reached to the very well-springs of my being, something integral in my essential self, something that was omnipresent like a pulsing undercurrent in my very blood and bone. Try as I might, I could not rid myself of it; I regretted a thousand times having yielded to Professor Shrewsbury's invitation that evening in Singapore, which already seemed incredibly far away. This cloud hung over me without alleviation day after day until the day of our departure from Ponape.

That day dawned sultry and hot—and, for me, filled with foreboding. We set out early on the destroyer *Hamilton*, with General Holberg aboard. Professor Shrewsbury had worked out a course; he had had further discussions with the seaman, Sereke, and he had arrived at an approximate location. Nor, I gathered, had the General been idle; aeroplanes had been scouting the sea in the vicinity of the place where

the *Yokohama* had gone down, and one pilot had reported seeing a curiously fog-shrouded area in the sea; no land had been visible, but the occurrence of an unmoving mass of fog was in itself strange enough to command attention. The latitude and longitude had been sent in, and it was for this spot that the *Hamilton* set out.

Despite my forebodings, however, our journey was singularly uneventful. The clouds which had obscured the sun at dawn drew away by mid-day; the sultriness, too, vanished and gave way to a clear, less humid atmosphere. An air of excitement prevailed, a kind of tension which we all shared, except for the General, whose manner was that of a military man obeying an order without quite believing in its necessity. He and the professor held some colloquy on the destructiveness of modern warfare. And what, Professor Shrewsbury wanted to know, was likely to happen to so small a land area as the Black Island.

"Wiped out," said the General laconically.

"I wonder," answered the professor.

I do not know whether I actually expected the destroyer to reach the Black Island; certainly I did not share the General's calm confidence. But in late afternoon of that day we sighted an uncharted island, and within a short time we were lowering a boat containing Professor Shrewsbury, Phelan, Keane, and myself; a second boat carried paraphernalia together with Boyd and Colum, and two men from the destroyer. Significantly, the ship's guns were trained on the structure just visible on the island.

It did not surprise me to find the Black Island to be the temple peak of my dream. Here it was, exactly as I had seen it, with the carven door open and the mouth of that great portal yawning to the sun despite an aura of mist which lay greenly over everything. The ruins were breathtaking, though plainly ravaged by quakes and, quite clearly, by explosives, whose ineffectual damage differed from that greater damage of earthquake, which had burst asunder many of the angles of the colossal stone building. The stones, like the soil, were black, and forbidding; and their surfaces were covered with terrible hieroglyphs and shocking images. The building was composed of angles and planes which were non-Euclidean, hinting horribly of alien dimensions and spheres, as had this building and what remained of the sunken city beyond it been constructed by non-terrestrials.

PROFESSOR SHREWSBURY cautioned us before we landed.

"I believe Sereke's story to be substantially true," he said, "and I have no hope that this attack will seal the opening or destroy its guardians. We must therefore be prepared to flee at the slightest suggestion that something is rising from below. We need not fear anything other which might appear; the stones will protect us from them; but if He who waits dreaming below rises, we dare not linger. Let us therefore lose no time in mining the portal."

The surface of the island was cloying. The muck had not yet been exposed sufficiently to the sun to be dried; moreover, the pale green mists which continued to hang about the island were humid and faintly malodorous, not alone of the exposed surfaces of something long under water, but of something more, an animal-like smell which was neither a musk nor a pungence, but a cloying, almost charnel smell. The atmosphere of the island differed sharply from that of the surrounding sea; perhaps it was the cloying smell, perhaps the humidity, perhaps the exhalation of the ancient stones. And over all hung an aura of dread, all the more inexplicable for the still brightly-shining sun, and the protective presence of the *Hamilton*, lying not far off shore.

We worked rapidly. Nevertheless, none of us could escape the growing sense of malevolence which was manifest. The aura of dread which clung to the island heightened steadily, apprehension of some impending horror increased; there was a mounting tension among us, despite the fact that Professor Shrewsbury maintained a ceaseless vigilance at the very threshold of the yawning cavern, ingress to which was afforded by the broken doorway; it was plain to see that he expected danger from this source, if no other, though the very

waters around the island were fraught with peril, if Sereke's story were uncolored by his imagination.

At the same time I was agonizingly aware of inimical forces which seemed almost personal; I felt them physically, quite apart from the chaotic confusion of my thoughts. In truth, the island affected me profoundly, and its effect was cumulative, not only fear but a deep depression of my spirits, not only apprehension but a basic disorder of such a nature as to stir up within me a conflict, of the significance of which I was not cognizant, but a conflict which was alarmingly disorganizing, so that I found myself at one and the same time eager to help, and at the same time anxious to impede or destroy the work being done by my companions.

It was almost with relief that I heard the professor's abrupt cry, "He is coming!"

I looked up. There was a faint green luminosity showing far down the well of dark within the portal, just such a luminosity as I had seen in my dream. I knew, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that what would emerge from that maw would be akin to the being seen in my dream, also, a terrifying, horrible caricature of an octopoid creature with the grotesquely gigantic half-head of a human being. And for one instant I was moved, not to follow the others, who were already on their way down to the boats, carrying the detonator for the explosives which had been laid all about the portal, but to hurl myself down into that pit of darkness, down the monolithic steps, to that nether place in accursed R'lyeh where Great Cthulhu lay dreaming, waiting his time to rise once more and seize the waters and the lands of Earth.

The moment broke. I turned at Professor Shrewsbury's sharp call, and followed, with the malevolence of that charnel place rising behind me like a cloud, and with the horrible conviction that I was marked as the especial victim of that ghastly being making its way out of the depths below that eldritch temple. I was the last of them to reach the boats, and at once we pushed off for the destroyer.

It was still light, though the day was now far gone. The sun had not yet gone down, so that what took place on that awe-inspiring island was plainly visible to all of us. We had moved as far out into the sea as the wires to the explosives permitted. There we waited upon Professor Shrewsbury's order to detonate the explosives, and we were accordingly given the opportunity to see the emergence of the ghastly being from the depths.

The first movement was of tentacles, which came oozing forth from the opening, slithering over the great rocks, accompanied by a horrible sloshing, sucking sound, as of great footsteps in the bowels of earth. Then abruptly there loomed within the portal, preceded by an emanation of green light, a thing which was little more than a protoplasmic mass, from the body of which a thousand tentacles of every length and thickness flailed forth, from the head of which, constantly altering in shape from an amorphous bulge to a simulacrum of a man's head, a single malevolent eye peered. A shocking sound as of retching, accompanied by ululations and a fluted whistling, came to us across the water.

I closed my eyes; I could not bear to see in reality the horror I had seen in dream so short a time ago.

At that instant, Professor Shrewsbury gave the signal.

THE explosives burst with a tremendous concussion. What had survived that earlier explosion, including now the portal itself, burst upward and outward. The thing in the doorway, too, was torn open, and in a few moments, portions of the stone blocks fell upon it, further shattering it. But, chillingly, when the sound of the explosion had died away, there came to our ears still, without change, the ululations and the whistling and the retching sounds we had heard. And there, before our eyes, the shattered mass of the thing from the depths, was flowing together like water, *reforming*, shaping itself anew once more!

Professor Shrewsbury's face was grim, but he did not hesitate. He ordered the boats returned to the destroyer at once; what we had seen lent strength and purpose to our arms, and we reached the *Hamilton* within a very short time.

General Holberg, glasses in hand, faced us on the top deck. "A shocking thing, Professor Shrewsbury. Must it be the weapon?"

Professor Shrewsbury nodded silently.

General Holberg raised one arm aloft. "Now let us watch," he said.

The thing on the island was still growing. It towered now above the ruins, expanding into the heavens, beginning to flow down to the water's edge.

"Horrible, horrible," murmured General Holberg. "What in God's name is it?"

"Perhaps something from an alien dimension," replied the professor wearily. "No one knows. It may be that even the weapon is powerless against it."

"Nothing can resist that, sir."

"The military mind," murmured the professor.

The *Hamilton* was moving away, gathering speed.

"How long will it take, General?"

"The carrier will have had our signal by this time; the plane was loaded. It should not take longer than it takes us to reach the limit of safety."

On the island a great black mass stood out against the setting sun, diminishing now only because we were moving so rapidly away from it. Presently the island itself was lost, and only the suggestive black mass remained, dark upon the heavens.

Overhead roared an aeroplane, making for the island.

"There it goes," cried General Holberg. "Please look away. Even at this distance the light will be blinding."

We turned obediently.

In a few moments the sound came, shockingly. In another few seconds the force of the explosion struck us like a physical blow. It seemed a long time before the General spoke again.

"Look now, if you like."

We turned.

Over the place where the Black Island had been loomed now a gigantic cloud, mushrooming and billowing skyward, a cloud greater than the size of the island itself, of white and gray and tan colors, beautiful in itself to see. And I knew what

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the "weapon" had been, remembering Hiroshima and the Bikini experiment, I knew what a titanic force had fallen upon that hideously menacing island risen from the Pacific for the last time only to be blown asunder with all that it contained, forever.

"I rather think it cannot have survived that," said General Holberg calmly.

"I pray Heaven you are right," said Professor Shrewsbury firmly.

I REMEMBER now, after all these months, how sober and grave Professor Shrewsbury was at our parting. I remember how he said something in sympathy, and I did not then understand it, but since then I have come to know that somehow, despite the fact that behind those black glasses he always wore, that strange and wise man had no eyes with which to see, and yet saw, he saw more than I myself knew about myself.

I think of this now often. We parted where we had met, at Singapore. From Singapore I went back to Cambodia, then to Calcutta, then to Tibet and back to the coast, from which I took ship for America, driven now by more than curiosity about archeology, by an insistence upon knowing more of myself, of my father and mother, of my grandparents. We parted as friends, united by a common bond. Professor Shrewsbury's words had been hopeful, yet faintly prophetic. Perhaps, he had said, *He* had died in the atomic blast; but we must recognize, he had insisted, that something from an alien dimension, something from another planet might not be subject to our natural laws; one could only hope. His work was either done or had gone as far as it could go, short of ceaseless vigilance to stop up temporarily every avenue to the open that might be attempted by Cthulhu or those who followed him, who worshipped him and did the bidding of the Ancient Ones.

Because I alone, of the six of us, had no doubt. Not of the death and disintegration of the thing on the Black Island, but of its survival. I knew by an intuition I could not then explain that R'lyeh still stood in its depths, wounded but not destroyed, that the dweller in those subaqueous depths still existed in whatever form he chose to assume, that his worshippers still bowed in submission to him from every sea and port in the world.

I went home to find out why I had had what I recognized as a feeling of kinship for the Deep Ones, for the thing that lived in the sunken realm of R'lyeh, for Cthulhu, of whom it was once said and is still said, and will be said until the coming again, *"Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah-nagl fhtagn."* I went home to Massachusetts to discover why my mother went veiled for most of her life, to learn what it meant to be one of the Waites of Innsmouth, destroyed by the Federals in 1928 to wipe out the accursed plague which had come upon the inhabitants, including the Waites who were my grandparents and my parents.

FOR their blood flows in my veins, the blood of the Deep Ones, the spawn of that black mating in the South Pacific. And I know that I have earned their especial hatred as a traitor to that blood, for even now I feel the longing to descend into the depths, to make my way to the glory of Y'ha-nthlei where it lies in the Atlantic off Devil's Reef beyond Innsmouth, to the splendor of R'lyeh in the waters near Ponape, and even now I know the fear of going to them with the taste of treachery in my mouth.

At night I hear them, calling, "Horvath Waite. Horvath Waite!"

And I wonder how long it will be before they seek me out and find me.

For it was vain to hope, as Professor Shrewsbury did, that Cthulhu could have been vanquished so easily. The battle of the Elder Gods had been far greater, far more titantic than even that impressive bomb which had erased the Black Island from the face of the Pacific that memorable day. And that interstellar battle had lasted long before victory was won by the Elder Gods, who were all-powerful, who were great above all others and banished the Ancient Ones to outer darkness forever.

For weeks after my shocking discovery, I asked myself which one of us would be

the first to be discovered. I asked myself how it would be brought about—certainly by no crude means, no alarming crime which might startle into renewed activity Professor Shrewsbury and Andrew Phelan and the others.

And today the papers brought me an answer.

> "Gloucester, Mass.—The Rev. Abel Keane, a newly ordained clergyman, was drowned today while swimming near Gloucester. He had been accounted an excellent swimmer, but went down within sight of many other bathers. His body has not yet been recovered . . ."

Now I ask myself who will be next?

And how long will he be in the endless progression of days before those who serve Him will summon me to atonement in those black depths where Great Cthulhu lies dreaming, waiting upon his time to rise again and take possession of the lands and the seas and all that lives within them, once more as before, once more and forever more?

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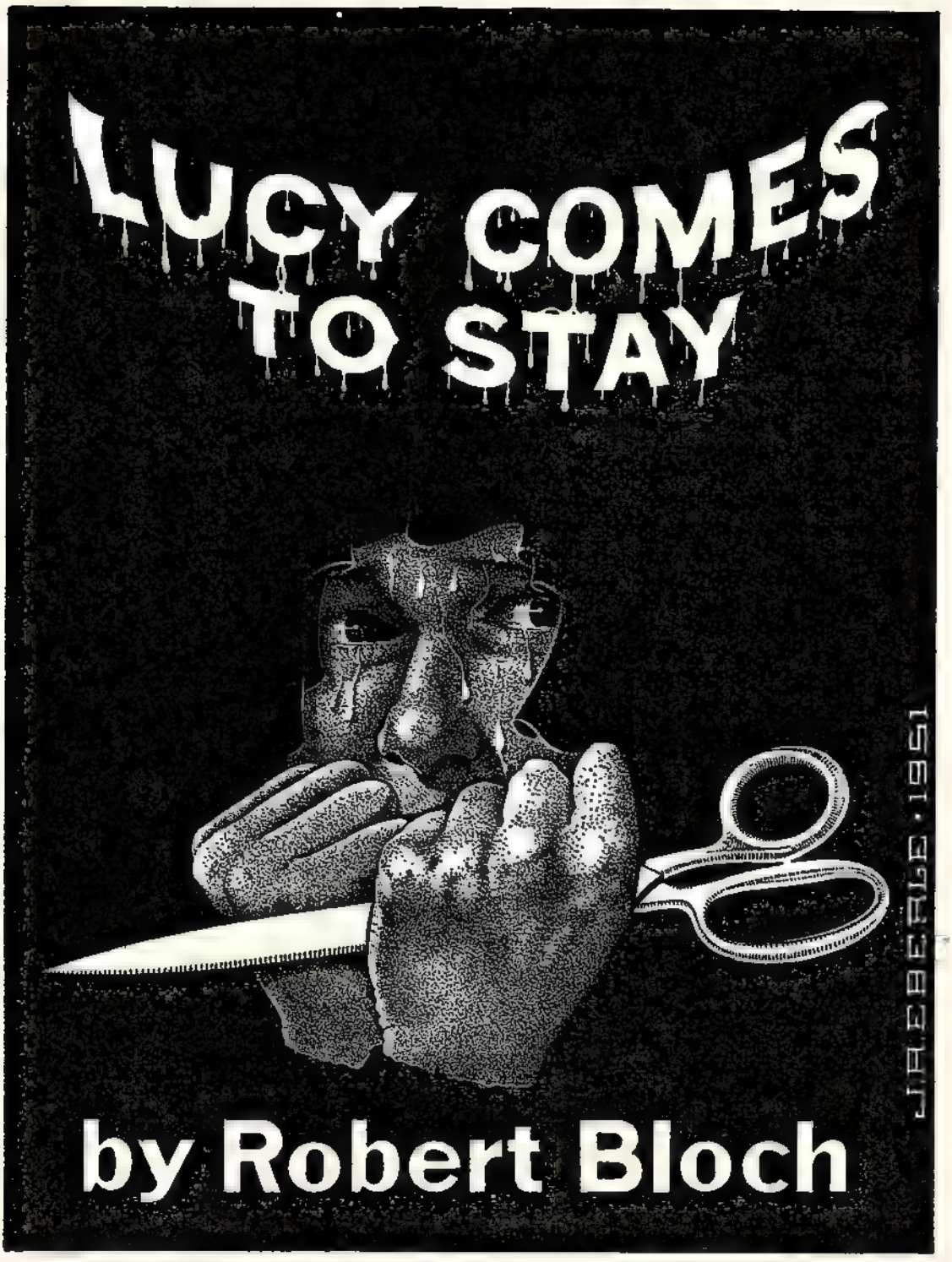
LUCY COMES TO STAY



by Robert Bloch

"YOU can't go on this way."

Lucy kept her voice down low, because she knew the nurse had her room just down the hall from mine, and I wasn't supposed to see any visitors.

"But George is doing everything he can —poor dear, I hate to think of what all those doctors and specialists are costing him, and the sanatorium bill, too. And now that nurse, that Miss Higgins, staying here every day."

"It won't do any good. You know it

won't." Lucy didn't sound like she was arguing with me. She *knew*. That's because Lucy is smarter than I am. Lucy wouldn't have started the drinking and gotten into such a mess in the first place. So it was about time I listened to what she said.

"Look, Vi," she murmured. "I hate to tell you this. You aren't well, you know. But you're going to find out one of these days anyway, and you might as well hear it from me."

"What is it, Lucy?"

"About George, and the doctors. They don't think you're going to get well." She paused. "They don't want you to."

"Oh, Lucy!"

"Listen to me, you little fool. Why do you suppose they sent you to that sanatorium in the first place? They said it was to take the cure. So you took it. All right, you're cured, then. But you'll notice that you still have the doctor coming every day, and George makes you stay here in your room, and that Miss Higgins who's supposed to be a special nurse—you know what she is, don't you? She's a guard."

I couldn't say anything. I just sat there and blinked. I wanted to cry, but I couldn't, because deep down inside I knew that Lucy was right.

"Just try to get out of here," Lucy said. "You'll see how fast she locks the door on you. All that talk about special diets and rest doesn't fool me. Look at yourself—you're as well as I am! You ought to be getting out, seeing people, visiting your friends."

"But I have no friends," I reminded her. "Not after that party, not after what I did—"

"That's a lie." Lucy nodded. "That's what George wants you to think. Why, you have hundreds of friends, Vi. They still love you. They tried to see you at the hospital and George wouldn't let them in. They sent flowers to the sanatorium and George told the nurses to burn them."

"He did? He told the nurses to burn the flowers?"

"Of course. Look, Vi, it's about time you faced the truth. George wants them to think you're sick. George wants you to think you're sick. Why? Because then he can put you away for good. Not in a private sanatorium, but in the—"

"No!" I began to shake. I couldn't stop shaking. It was ghastly. But it proved something. They told me at the sanatorium, the doctors told me, that if I took the cure I wouldn't get the shakes any more. Or the dreams, or any of the other things. Yet here it was—I was shaking again.

"Shall I tell you some more?" Lucy whispered. "Shall I tell you what they're putting in your food? Shall I tell you about George and Miss Higgins?"

"But she's older than he is, and besides he'd never—"

Lucy laughed.

"Stop it!" I yelled.

"All right. But don't yell, you little fool. Do you want Miss Higgins to come in?"

"She thinks I'm taking a nap. She gave me a sedative."

"Lucky I dumped it out." Lucy frowned. "Vi, I've got to get you away from here. And there isn't much time."

She was right. There wasn't much time. Seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks—how long had it been since I'd had a drink?

"We'll sneak off," Lucy said. "We could take a room together where they wouldn't find us. I'll nurse you until you're well."

"But rooms cost money."

"You have that fifty dollars George gave you for a party dress."

"Why, Lucy," I said. "How did you know that?"

"You told me ages ago, dear. Poor thing, you don't remember things very well, do you? All the more reason for trusting me."

I nodded. I could trust Lucy. Even though she was responsible, in a way,

Heading by Joseph Eberle

for me starting to drink. She just had thought it would cheer me up when George brought all his high-class friends to the house and we went out to impress his clients. Lucy had tried to help. I could trust her. I must trust her—

"We can leave as soon as Miss Higgins goes tonight," Lucy was saying. "We'll wait until George is asleep, eh? Why not get dressed now, and I'll come back for you."

I got dressed. It isn't easy to dress when you have the shakes, but I did it. I even put on some make-up and trimmed my hair a little with the big scissors. Then I looked at myself in the mirror and said out loud, "Why, you can't tell, can you?"

"Of course not," said Lucy. "You look radiant. Positively radiant."

I stood there smiling, and the sun was going down, just shining through the window on the scissors in a way that hurt my eyes, and all at once I was so sleepy.

"George will be here soon, and Miss Higgins will leave," Lucy said. "I'd better go now. Why don't you rest until I come for you?"

"Yes," I said. "You'll be very careful, won't you?"

"Very careful," Lucy whispered, and tiptoed out quietly.

I lay down on the bed and then I was sleeping, really sleeping for the first time in weeks, sleeping so the scissors wouldn't hurt my eyes, the way George hurt me inside when he wanted to shut me up in the asylum so he and Miss Higgins could make love on my bed and laugh at me the way they all laughed except Lucy and she would take care of me she knew what to do now I could trust her when George came and I must sleep and sleep and nobody can blame you for what you think in your sleep or do in your sleep. . . .

It was all right until I had the dreams, and even then I didn't really worry about them because a dream is only a dream, and when I was drunk I had a lot of dreams.

When I woke up I had the shakes again, but it was Lucy shaking me, standing there in the dark shaking me. I looked around and saw that the door to my room was open, but Lucy didn't bother to whisper.

She stood there with the scissors in her hand and called to me.

"Come on, let's hurry."

"What are you doing with the scissors?" I asked.

"Cutting the telephone wires, silly! I got into the kitchen after Miss Higgins left and dumped some of that sedative into George's coffee. Remember, I told you the plan."

I couldn't remember now, but I knew it was all right. Lucy and I went out through the hall, past George's room, and he never stirred. Then we went downstairs and out the front door and the street-lights hurt my eyes. Lucy made me hurry right along, though.

We took a streetcar around the corner. This was the difficult part, getting away. Once we were out of the neighborhood, there'd be no worry. The wires were cut.

The lady at the rooming house on the South Side didn't know about the wires being cut. She didn't know about me, either, because Lucy got the room.

Lucy marched in bold as brass and laid my fifty dollars down on the desk. The rent was $12.50 a week in advance, and Lucy didn't even ask to see the room. I guess that's why the landlady wasn't worried about baggage.

WE GOT upstairs and locked the door, and then I had the shakes again.

Lucy said, "Vi—cut it out!"

"But I can't help it. What'll I do now, Lucy? Oh, what'll I do? Why did I ever—"

"Shut up!" Lucy opened my purse and pulled something out. I had been wondering why my purse felt so heavy but I never dreamed about the secret.

She held the secret up. It glittered under the light, like the scissors, only this was a nice glittering. A golden glittering.

"A whole pint!" I gasped. "Where did you get it?"

"From the cupboard downstairs, naturally. You knew George still keeps the stuff around. I slipped it into your purse, just in case."

I had the shakes, but I got that bottle open in ten seconds. One of my fingernails broke, and then the stuff was burning and warming and softening—

"Pig!" said Lucy.

"You know I had to have it," I whispered. "That's why you brought it."

"I don't like to see you drink," Lucy answered. "I never drink and I don't like to see you hang one on, either."

"Please, Lucy. Just this once."

"Why can't you take a shot and then leave it alone? That's all I ask."

"Just this once, Lucy, I have to."

"I won't sit here and watch you make a spectacle of yourself. You know what always happens—another mess."

I took another gulp. The bottle was half-empty.

"I did all I could for you, Vi. But if you don't stop now, I'm going."

That made me pause. "You couldn't do that to me. I need you, Lucy. Until I'm straightened out, anyway."

Lucy laughed, the way I didn't like. "Straightened out! That's a hot one! Talking about straightening out with a bottle in your hand. It's no use, Vi. Here I do everything I can for you, I stop at nothing to get you away, and you're off on another."

"Please. You know I can't help it."

"Oh, yes, you can help it, Vi. But you don't want to. You've always had to make a choice, you know. George or the bottle. Me or the bottle. And the bottle always wins. I think deep down inside you hate George. You hate me."

"You're my best friend."

"Nuts!" Lucy talked vulgar sometimes, when she got really mad. And she was mad, now. It made me so nervous I had another drink.

"Oh, I'm good enough for you when you're in trouble, or have nobody else around to talk to. I'm good enough to lie for you, pull you out of your messes. But I've never been good enough for your friends, for George. And I can't even win over a bottle of rotgut whiskey. It's no use, Vi. What I've done for you today you'll never know. And it isn't enough. Keep your lousy whiskey. I'm going."

I know I started to cry. I tried to get up, but the room was turning round and round. Then Lucy was walking out the door and I dropped the bottle and the light kept shining the way it did on the scissors and I closed my eyes and dropped after the bottle to the floor. . . .

WHEN I woke up they were all pestering me, the landlady and the doctor and Miss Higgins and the man who said he was a policeman.

I wondered if Lucy had gone to them and betrayed me, but when I asked the doctor said no, they just discovered me through a routine checkup on hotels and rooming-houses after they found George's body in his bed with my scissors in his throat.

All at once I knew what Lucy had done, and why she ran out on me that way. She knew they'd find me and call it murder.

So I told them about her and how it must have happened. I even figured out how Lucy managed to get my fingerprints on the scissors.

But Miss Higgins said she'd never seen Lucy in my house, and the landlady told a lie and said I had registered for the room alone, and the man from the police just laughed when I kept begging him to find Lucy and make her tell the truth.

Only the doctor seemed to understand, and when we were alone together in the little room he asked me all about her and what she looked like, and I told him.

Then he brought over the mirror and held it up and asked me if I could see her. And sure enough—

She was standing right behind me, laughing. I could see her in the mirror and I told the doctor so, and he said yes, he thought he understood now.

So it was all right after all. Even when I got the shakes just then and dropped the mirror, so that the little jagged pieces hurt my eyes to look at, it was all right.

Lucy was back with me now, and she wouldn't ever go away any more. She'd stay with me forever. I knew that. I knew it, because even though the light hurt my eyes, Lucy began to laugh.

After a minute, I began to laugh, too. And then the two of us were laughing together, we couldn't stop even when the doctor went away. We just stood there against the bars, Lucy and I, laughing like crazy.

The Seamstress

BY
E. EVERETT
EVANS

. . . slave to a Fate that would not leave her alone.

Heading by Carl Kidwell

COLLECTORS of Internal Revenue are continually running into some very peculiar situations, but I seriously doubt if anyone of them ever struck one as strange, as unbelievable, as the one I had some time ago. I use the word "unbelievable" with intent, for I am not sure even yet that somebody hasn't done a mighty fine job of leg-pulling on me. And yet . . . there was so much sincerity and truth in little Miss Angie's eyes. It is hard to believe anyone like her could die. Besides, I saw that bobbin.

Anyway, for the second year we had received a very strange tax return, and decided it should be investigated. Not that the figures weren't correct—they just didn't make sense to us.

Since I am one of the department's trouble-shooters, I was sent to Springfield to look into the matter. Now "Springfield" is not the name of the place I went. I use

that because the United States Postal Guide lists twenty-five Springfields, and I do not want to see that poor, rich wonderful, unfortunate little lady molested by idle curiosity seekers—or fortune hunters. You see, in spite of the generally-held belief, we Collectors of Internal Revenue do have hearts.

Miss Angie—everyone in Springfield called her that, and I soon got the habit—lived in a charming little cottage. The small entrance porch was covered with morning glories and climbing roses. Just off the front hall was a large, sunny workroom with a big bay window in front of which, on low stands, were dozens of potted geraniums.

Seated in a little, low, armless rocking chair, with work tables on either side, was a small, apparently middle-aged woman, who was neither pretty nor handsome. But she had a personality shining from her that instantly made you forget such trivialities as mere prettiness.

After explaining my mission, I asked her about it. "You list returns from investments that must run into millions. Yet that money is merely deposited in your account at the bank, and your actual expenditures listed are just smaller than this item of nine hundred and sixty-seven dollars you list as earned by your sewing."

She nodded placidly without looking up. "Goodness, yes. I've always made enough from my sewing to live on."

"But all that other . . ."

"Was my husband's. When he was . . . killed . . . I didn't have any use for it. I asked the bank to take care of it for me, and I 'sposed everything was all right about it. They make out my tax returns."

"Yes, Mr. Jacobs explained all that to me. My superiors sent me here because this seemed so unusual they wanted to make sure it was correct."

"The government can have it all if they want it," she said almost acidly. "Goodness, I don't need it, and I don't know how to give it away so it'll do more good than harm."

I shook my head in perplexity. "Why do you work so hard at sewing when you have so much more than you need?"

Her face paled and she shook so, as with a palsy, that I hastened to beg her pardon. "It was mere curiosity, not official business. You don't need to answer."

After a moment she quieted down and peered at me through the steel-bowed spectacles she wore.

"You're from out of town, and I think you'd not go blabbing it around here, any more'n Banker Jacobs does. I don't want the people here ever to know the story. But I think it would do me good to tell it to someone. But I warn you," her smile was very strained as she looked up at me, "you won't believe me. You'll probably think I'm feeble-minded or something. But that's all right. Goodness knows I often think so myself.

"It all started back quite a few years ago," she began. "I guess the best place to begin is with Marcy Howland."

I was struck with the fact that she kept right on sewing all the time she was talking, her needle flashing in and out, making the finest, tiniest stitches I've ever seen. Yet she apparently paid no attention to her work, for I seldom saw her even look at it. But here is her story. Judge for yourself.

"OH, MISS ANGIE, I've such good news! I'm to be married, and you're to make my wedding dress—white satin, old lace and all!"

The pert little figure in the low rocker looked up at the flushed face of the girl dancing and whirling about the room, too excited to stand still.

"Well, I declare to goodness, Marcy, that's just fine. How'd it happen, and who's the lucky fellow?"

"I'm the lucky one, Miss Angie. It was after the dance last night, and it must have been that pink party dress you made for me that did it. My fiance," she savored the word on her tongue, "is Ronald McClain. It's funny, for he's never hardly looked at me before, in spite of how I've loved him all these years. But he danced with me several times, then begged to take me home, and asked me to marry him."

The happy girl stopped her pirouetting before the big bay window, where the afternoon sun was shining warmly. She stooped to smell the potted flowers there. "Your geraniums are doing so well this year, aren't

they, Miss Angie?" But then, the whole world must have been beautiful to Marcy Petersen that day.

The little seamstress looked more closely at the excited girl. Inwardly she had marvelled that such a plain, drab, timid young woman had managed to catch a husband at all, to say nothing of such a catch as Ronny McClain, probably the town's most eligible bachelor.

But as she now examined the girl, Miss Angie was struck by the change that had come over her. Why, Marcy's face and eyes were sparkling and alive, her drab hair seemed softed and gleamed with highlights, her very skin seemed to have come alive and was flushed with health and vitality.

As the girl babbled away about her plans and her happiness, and the things she wanted the little seamstress to make for her, one thought intruded into Miss Angie's consciousness with such force as to make her gasp aloud.

Instantly the girl turned to her in concern. "What is it, Miss Angie? Are you sick?"

"No . . . nothing . . . it's nothing, Child." How could she tell her fears about those strange coincidences that had been happening here in Springfield the past year or so?

For now she remembered it was while she was working on that pink party dress of Marcy's that Ronny McClain had come to her workroom and she had laid aside the dress to sew monograms on his new shirts.

And had used thread from the strange bobbin for both jobs!

She made herself snap out of it. "I'm sure you and Ronny will be very happy, Marcy. I'll put my finest stitches into your dress, you can be sure."

AFTER the girl was gone, Miss Angie got up and made a pot of tea. While sipping the fragrant brew, her thoughts spun webs of memory.

Dear Billy Conner. He had always been a pet of hers, even as a little boy living next door. After his parents were killed in that train wreck, he lived with her while finishing his last two years of high school. Then he fulfilled a boyhood ambition by "going to sea."

"But he always comes back to me between trips," she joyfully told visitors who asked after him. "He tells me the grandest stories and brings me odd things he picks up in all those foreign places he goes to," and she'd point to the whatnot in the corner.

His latest present had been that peculiar bobbin of thread, found in a bazaar in some little Greek port town. It was made of lemonwood, he told her, and was carved with strange designs that, when studied, she seemed almost able to understand, but never quite could.

But it was the thread that puzzled her . . . and the fact that the bobbin never seemed to empty.

When he gave it to her the thread was a fine, black silk. She first used it when repairing a tear in Gertrude Clarke's black poplin. It seemed such good thread, and worked so neatly into the fabric that when she finished the repair she was surprised, even though she considered herself an expert seamstress. Once she let the exact spot out of sight for a moment, it was impossible to tell where she had worked on it.

The next day she was searching her thread rack for a certain shade of blue cotton and, to her great amazement, discovered that this peculiar bobbin now held exactly the shade and texture of thread she needed.

At first she was puzzled by the uncanny way that weird bobbin always held exactly the thread she needed, no matter how often she went to it. Pink silk, blue cotton, black linen — anything and everything came from it.

She grew a bit frightened, then worried lest she be committing some sort of sin by taking advantage of such unholy magic. For in Miss Angie's simple, child-like heart only the deepest-dyed, most sinful sort of black magic could accomplish such things.

But gradually, through continued use, her fears and doubts began to dissipate.

"It *is* a comfort to have such a handy thing around," she defended her use of it to herself. "Now I never have to hunt for the exact match to whatever I'm working on."

Once in her needle the thread seemed almost alive. Her stitches were truer, her work far more excellent than it had ever been, so perfectly did the thread blend into the fabric.

All of which was a mercy to her tired eyes and, her fears once allayed, a thing to be accepted gratefully and used regularly. Thus does one of simple faith accept the gifts that the gods—now why did she use that expression, rather than "God"?—give to certain fortunate people.

IT was only gradually that she came to notice these many peculiar coincidences—if they were that. Sitting hour after hour with busy hands every day as she did, her active little mind raced as fast as her flashing fingers.

Although she seldom left her little cottage, she knew the news and gossip of her small town almost as soon as it happened. There were a dozen business callers each day, besides many friends who dropped in for a simple chat of gossip. Each brought a load of news and the talk of the town. Nor was it only the women who came. There was no tailor in Springfield, so she did sewing for men, as well as dressmaking and hat trimming for the women.

Let's see now, her thoughts flashed back. The first time was when Constable Bivins came to see me after that terrible fight between Chuck Wiggins and Bob Considine. Someone mentioned seeing both boys come here that morning, so he came to ask if either had said anything that might shed light on their quarrel, that had flared into that sudden, awful fight.

"Why . . . why, no," she was aghast at his news. "Goodness me, neither of them even mentioned the other. Chuck just wanted a suspender button sewed back on his pants, and Bob had torn a pocket on his coat."

It was only after the constable left that the thought came to Miss Angie that she had used thread from the bobbin for both jobs. She grew almost frightened. Had she been to blame for that fight?

But later in the day she had sewn some lace on a camisole for Jenny Edwards and lengthened a pair of her husband's trousers. The two had been on the verge of a separation for some time, but after that night they had grown closer than they had ever been. So Miss Angie figured if the bobbin brought bad luck, it also brought good.

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These had been only momentary wonders to Miss Angie, but as such cases multiplied week after week—some good, some bad—she began to worry again, and decided that terrible bobbin was to blame. She carried it out and threw it in the garbage can.

But the next morning, when she sat down in her low rocker, there was that bobbin back on her sewing table.

Startled, and really afraid of it now, she regarded it wordlessly for some minutes. Then she rose determinedly, picked it up between thumb and forefinger, and started towards her kitchen stove where there was still a hot fire.

But a sudden *compulsion* stopped her in her tracks, and she felt a thought in her mind as strong as a spoken word. "Sew," it said.

A sudden surge of anger and determination made her small figure straighten. She spoke aloud, the better to emphasize her feelings.

"I *won't* use it any more!" and again she struggled to go to the stove and burn that bobbin and its horrible, magic thread.

"Sew!" the command seemed to make her senses reel with its force.

Slowly, against her will, she found herself going back to her low chair and taking up the dress on which she was working. Time after time, through the days that followed, she tried to destroy that cursed bobbin of thread, but found the coercion ever present, ever stronger than her will and determination.

In time, to preserve her peace of mind, she developed the conviction that it was only her foolish fancy that had, first, made her imagine it was evil and, second, that something was forcing her to continue using it. Now she accepted the fact meekly, without further questioning, and without thinking about it except when some new coincidence forced itself upon her consciousness.

MISS Angie was making a new dress for Margie White, whom she considered about the prettiest and sweetest girl in Springfield. She sat dreaming of this and that, her needle plying in and out without too much attention.

The front door opened and heavy footsteps approached her workroom. As she looked up, she saw Hank Brower in the doorway. He grinned at her shamefaced.

"Ma'am, I tore my overalls—in a sort of an exposed place. Could you do a rush job on 'em?"

"Why certainly, Henry. Oh," as he came closer, "you mean the ones you have on?" he nodded. "Go back of the screen there and take 'em off."

He did so, and threw them to her.

"How do you like railroading?" she asked, as she worked.

"I like it fine, mostly. Braking isn't too bad, and if I can make good I'll get a chance at conducting some of these days."

"You'll make good," she said sagely. "You've got good stuff in you. I remember your Pa. He was a fine man, and you're a lot like him."

"Thanks, Miss Angie. If I can be half the man he was . . ." he let it go at that.

Hardly had the door closed behind him when it banged open and shut again, and a rush of feet brought a big, breezy young man running into the room.

"Hi, Miss Angie, I'm home again!" and two strong young arms scooped her out of her chair and into a big bear hug.

"Billy! Oh, it's good to see you again!"

She was filled with the joy that the safe return of "her boy" always brought. She kissed him and looked him over carefully to make sure he was well and happy.

For an hour they chatted swiftly of their experiences of the past year, glad and content to be together again.

FINALLY he rose. "Think I'll go down town for a little while."

"You're staying here, of course."

"Where else?" he grinned. "Think I want you to paddle me for even suggesting going to a hotel."

Suddenly she remembered the girl. "By the way," she said with an attempt at casualness, "Margie White was in here awhile ago to have me make this dress for her. She's grown into a beautiful girl."

"Little pigtailed Margie? But thats' not surprising, she did have regular features."

"Maybe you'll see her."

He looked at her with pretending sever-

ity. "You wouldn't by any chance be indulging in a little match-making, would you, Miss Angie?"

She colored a bit at being caught. "Well, you'll be wanting a wife some day, and I want you to have the best."

He threw back his head and laughed uproariously, then came over and kissed her. "You sure beat the band, Darling."

He started out again, then turned back. "You need any money? I saved about four hundred this trip."

"Goodness, no, Billy. But thank you anyway. It's just like you to think of that. You put it away for saving."

He smiled. "You know you'll never have to worry if anything happens to me. I've signed my insurance to you, and the bank knows you get my money."

"Hush you now, Child, with that sort of talk. Goodness, nothing's going to happen to you."

But there was a fond smile of thanks on her face as she looked up at him. Then her sharp eyes noticed something amiss. "The braid's coming loose on your cap. Let me fix it."

He took it off and examined it. "So it is. Leave it to you to spot a thing like that," his smile was loving as he handed it to her. Then he saw her unwinding a length of golden silk from the old bobbin. "Hey, you still got that gadget I brought you? I 'sposed it's all be used up by now. Or did you wind some other thread on it? Seems I recall it was black silk, wasn't it?"

She hesitated, wondering swiftly if she should tell him about it, but he saved her the necessity. "Hey, did I tell you about when we were in Genoa?" and was off into another of his yarns.

She finished before he did, then he started out again. "See you all of a sudden," and with a cheery salute was gone.

The little seamstress smiled secretly as she picked up the dress and began working on it again. She found herself humming a wordless little tune as her swift fingers flashed in and out. He didn't know about that magic thread, and that she had used it consecutively for him and Margie. She was sure it would mean great happiness for them both.

It must have been about an hour later, when she was pulling basting threads from Margie's dres, using the point of her shears as dressmakers do, when suddenly, seemingly almost of themselves, the shears snapped together, cutting the thread in a place she had not intended.

Miss Angie laid the dress and shears down wearily. She sank back into her chair, removed her steel bows and rubbed her tired eyes. "Got to rest more," she murmured. "My nerves are getting very jumpy."

But the pressure and need for sewing made her uncomfortable at such loafing. She got up and brewed a pot of tea, then carried it back to her worktable, and sipped as she sewed.

IT was just about sundown, and Miss Angie had about decided it was time to fix some supper for Billy and herself, when there was a knock on the front door. Rising, she went to open it, wondering who it was that did not simply come in to her workroom.

Standing on the little, vine-covered porch was a tall, darkly handsome man, whom she recognized from descriptions given her, as a newcomer to Springfield.

"I was told you are a seamstress," he said, courteously removing his hat, and bowing in the continental manner.

"Yes. Come in, please." She opened the door wider to let him pass her, then showed him into the bay-windowed room. "What did you wish?"

He took a package from beneath his arm and opened it. "I just purchased some underwear, and find it too loose for comfort. I wondered if you could fix it for me?"

She fingered the fine silk. "What do you want done?"

He spread one out on the table. "You see how straight the lines. It bunches under my shirt. I usually have them tailormade, but had to get some more here. I thought perhaps you could take out a little on each side, make it more form-fitting."

"Goodness, yes, I can do that easily," she smiled. "This is beautiful material. Expensive, too, isn't it?"

He frowned a bit, as though she was go-

ing too far, then his face cleared into a smile. "I like nice things especially next to my skin."

Miss Angie looked up at him again, and this time studied him more closely. She liked what she saw, and as she continued staring, almost rudely, her heart began fluttering and a strange, new emotion came into being within her. She felt herself flushing and quickly turned away.

For in that moment Miss Angie had, for the first time in her busy, selfless but lonely life, fallen in love.

She made a pretense of hunting for her tape-measure, and when she felt she had herself at least partially under control, turned back to him.

"If you'll please remove your coat," she forced her voice to a calmness she did not yet feel, "I'll take your measurements."

Smiling, he did so, and she felt a wonderful ecstatic thrill as she put her arms about him to adjust the measure. Then she noted the size of his chest, stomach and hips, and jotted them down on a pad of paper.

Rapidly she counted the garments. "I see you bought half a dozen. I can have them ready for you day after tomorrow noon."

Again that almost-frown, then he smiled. "I'm quite busy day times. I'm an inventor of sorts, you may have heard. If it's convenient I'll come for them in the evening."

"Goodness, yes. Come whenever you have time."

When he had gone she sank into the low chair, her work and the meal she was supposed to prepare gone from her mind. She lay there, day-dreaming things she had never expected to feel, her love-starved mind conjuring up delights that made her squirm with pleasure even as she was scolding herself for even letting such thoughts into her consciousness.

But only for a short time, then the compulsion to sew made her pick up her work. Yet her mind continued deliciously engrossed with the sort of dreams most girls have in their late 'teens or early twenties, but which she'd had to wait until her early forties to know.

A sudden noise on the front porch dragged her away from those wonderful thoughts. "Oh, goodness, it's Billy, and supper not ready!" She started to rise.

But it was not Billy Conner. "Why, Constable Bivins," she gasped as the big man appeared in the doorway, his face strained.

"I . . . I got bad news for you, Miss Angie," and her breath caught in her throat. "Get hold of yourself . . . Bill Conner's just been killed—and Margie White!"

"Oh, *no*!" she moaned, and hid her face in her hands, while hot tears gushed from her eyes. The constable came over and laid a comforting hand on her shoulder. Gradually her sobs quieted and she was able to look up at him.

"How . . . how'd it happen?"

"They were walking together out by the edge of town, and were just crossing the mill side-tracks when some freight cars that had got away and were running loose jumped the track and turned over on 'em. Hank Brower, the brakeman, saw it and reported it. Seems he hadn't set the brakes tight enough to hold 'em on that grade."

"But what about Billy? What's you do with his . . .?

"It's at Morrison's undertaking parlors. I guess you'll have to make the plans—you're about the only kin he had left."

She cried noisily for some minutes, and again he reached out and patted her shoulder awkwardly in sympathy. Some time later she nodded.

"Yes," her voice was low, "I'm all he had left. I'll go down to Morrison's and make . . . arrangements. We'll have to get in touch with his ship and tell 'em he's not . . . coming back. And he said something about insurance to pay for his . . ." again the tears welled up, but she fought them under control.

AFTER the funeral little Miss Angie went back to her cottage and threw herself onto the bed, sobbing away her grief. She was too heart-broken to care about the promised work piled high on her tables, yet could not rid her mind of it. She had always been so conscientious and now, despite her grief and her wornout condition—she had barely slept since that shocking news—she felt somehow that she had no business lying here like this.

Hard as she tried to keep it away, the thought grew stronger. Again that strange, weird *compulsion* was in her mind, "Sew!" it commanded, and when she made no move to comply, it grew stronger and more persistent, like an ache inside her head. Finally, "SEW!" it thundered, and her weary body dragged itself back to the little, low chair.

She picked up a needle from her pincushion, and seeing only a four inch tag of thread left in it, automatically reached for the spool. She came up with that enigmatic bobbin. When she saw it, she realized again that it was—it *must be*—the cause of all the troubles—as well as the few seeming blessings—that had come to her and the people of Springfield since that dark day Billy had brought it to her.

Now, clearly, she remembered something that had not entered her consciousness before. Billy had said he found it in Greece. *Greece!* Her mind flashed back to her school days, and her reading of Greek mythology. To the Three Fates, Clotho who spun, Lachesis who sewed, and Atropos who snipped the threads of life.

"Oh, no! It can't be possible! Goodness, those were only old folk tales. There can't possibly be any truth in them."

Nevertheless, in a fit of revulsion she threw the bobbin into a far corner of the room. But instantly that inner coercion forced her to rise, cross the room, pick up the bobbin and bring it back to her chair.

Resignedly, although now more afraid of it than ever, she unreeled a length of thread from it. Without even looking at it, she knew it would be exactly the shade and texture of the cloth she was working on.

Almost without volition she worked on, paying no attention to what she was doing but knowing, subconsciously, that it was perfect work. Hour after hour she sewed, nor realized it had grown dark. She did not switch on the lights—when one is not looking at one's work, what need of light?

AGAIN there came a knock on the door. "Come in," she called wearily, and heard the door open and close.

She glanced up as a figure appeared in the doorway, and suddenly she came alive as she saw it was the handsome stranger.

"Oh," she fluttered, and switched on the lamp. "I'm terribly sorry, Sir, but I haven't finished your work. My . . . my boy was killed, you may have heard . . . Billy Conner . . . and we buried him today. I haven't felt like . . ."

"Yes," the voice was very sympathetic. "I heard, but I did not know he was your son."

"Oh, he wasn't, not really," she made haste to explain. "I never married. When I said he was my boy I meant I was about the best friend he had here after his parents were killed. He boarded with me while he was finishing school."

"I see," he smiled. "You're a very kind little lady."

She dimpled and smiled shyly at him. "I'll work real hard and have them for you tomorrow evening for sure. I . . . I'm so happy to do anything I can for you."

She knew she was acting like a silly schoolgirl, but she could not help it. Her heart was pounding and all the pent-up needs of those long, love-starved years welled out and became a palpable thing that even the stranger could not help but notice. How could she know that her wonderful, selfless personality shone about her like a halo?

"Why, that is most kind of you, Beautiful Lady. You are very charming. I kiss your hand," and he took her cold little fingers and bent over them in a polished manner never before seen in Springfield.

Nor did he release them immediately. Instead, he held her hand and fondled it as he looked penetratingly into her face. After a long moment he slowly loosed her hand. "I shall return, then, tomorrow evening. Or the day after—I am not in that much of a hurry for them."

"No . . . no," she stammered. "Tomorrow will be all right. And thank you."

"You are welcome," the resonant, courteous voice again thrilled her. "In a way, I am glad you do not have them done. It gives me the pleasure of seeing you once more."

After he had gone she sat day-dreaming again. But not for long. The inexorable pressure that now ruled her life was strong within her, nor could she disobay it until the dress was finished, long past midnight.

Then she found herself able, at long,

weary last, to go to bed. Her spent body was quickly asleep . . . but her dreams continued on and on . . .

THE next day seemed to drag as she worked swiftly, watching the clock, waiting for evening when she would see him again.

She scolded herself many times that long day for her silliness, but made no special effort to stop her so-pleasant dreaming.

That such a man could ever care for such a plain, middleaged spinster never once entered her thoughts. Her great love *must* communicate itself to him, and make him love her in return.

Late in the afternoon a new idea came to her. If the thread from that magic bobbin brought love to others when she sewed for two of them, one after another, why not for her?

Her breath gasped out, and she felt a vast worry that such a thing might bring him harm, rather than good. But something deep inside whispered that it would mean great mutual love.

She must chance it!

She dropped her work on his underwear, and took her nicest frock from the closet. She knew the fichu was torn in one place, and this she mended, the silk from that magic bobbin doing its work so the sewing was not perceptible. It needed pressing, too, she decided, so heated her iron and smoothed out the wrinkles. Then she put it on, and went back to finishing his work.

When he finally came it was done. She had prepared a nice little meal, and after showing him the work, she shyly asked him to share her meal with her.

"I am terribly sorry, Miss Angie, but I have just dined. But," seeing the hurt look on her face, "it was so nice of you to invite me, that I'm going to be presumptious and ask if I may come tomorrow evening instead?"

"Of course," she fluttered. "I'd love to have you. I . . ." but her shyness was too great, and she could not go on.

He seemed to understand her feeling, and again lifted her hand to kiss, pressing it gently in his fingers as he did so.

"I have a feeling, Little Lady, that we are fated to become very, very close . . . friends."

"Oh, I hope so." It was a low whisper.

Her heart sang all the next day as she worked, and her flying needle was no swifter than her flashing thoughts. She was pink with excitement all day, and her dreams were as rosy as her face.

Yet the hours seemed interminably long before it was time to prepare dinner. This time she took even more pains with her cooking.

But even crawling hours do pass, and finally he arrived. She met him at the door and gave him her hand to kiss. But under the influence of her love and desire she must have swayed toward him, for suddenly he gathered her into a close embrace.

She thrilled far more than even her dreams had imagined, as those strong arms went about her.

"Oh!" she thought rapturiously, "it *is* working for me, just as it did for Marcy and Ron, Jenny and Dick, and all the others!"

Slowly, shyly, she raised her face to his. "Oh my dear!" she whispered.

"You feel it, too?"

She nodded, face aflame and eyes not fully meeting his.

They were married four days later, and since he was merely staying at the hotel, they came back to her little cottage until, as he put it, they could build a house worthy of her.

Hardly had they removed their wraps than she felt herself forced into the sewing room, to sit in the low rocker and resume her work.

"Angie, Darling, you don't have to keep on sewing," he protested, half-humorously, half-angrily trying to take the unfinished dress out of her hands.

"But I do," she insisted, retaining her hold on the cloth. "I promised Mildred Blake she could have this tomorrow, and I've got to keep my promise."

He understood that, for promises were sacred to him, too. Reluctantly he let her keep on, but sat near her, and they talked of many things as the long hours wore on. He told her of his preference for small towns—the reason he was here or in some

other whenever his work permitted. She told him many of her own dreams and aspirations.

THE next morning she was up long before him, back at her sewing. When the dress was finally completed, he heaved a long sigh of relief, and even volunteered to deliver it.

When he returned, however, she was busily sewing on another. This time he lost his temper.

"Angie!" he almost shouted. "I won't have my wife sewing for other people like this! I have more money than we'll ever be able to spend. You don't have to work, and I don't want you to. I want you to relax and enjoy yourself. We'll make plans and take trips—all over the world if you wish."

She tried, valiantly. But it was to no avail. The fate to which she was now slave would not let her alone. Time after time she went back to her sewing; time after time he dragged her away from it.

At last she had to tell him. 'I . . . I can't stop sewing!" she wailed miserably, and the eyes she raised to his were panic-stricken. "I don't want to keep on, but something I can't resist makes me!"

"Nonsense," he said bruskly, with a man's sureness against a woman's supposed weakness. "I know how you like the people here, and how they all rely on you. But let them find someone else to do their drudgery —or learn how to sew, themselves!"

She shook her head miserably, wiped her eyes, and picked up her needle again. "You just don't understand, Dear. Goodness, it's not that simple at all."

Finally he wormed it out of her, and held the bobbin in his hands, examining it curiously. "It's certainly from ancient Greece," he said. "I recognize the letters, although I can't read it."

He straightened with determination, turned and strode across the room toward the heart fire, raising his hand to hurl that accurst bobbin to the flames. But somehow it . . . dropped . . . from his hands to the floor. His advancing foot struck against it, making him stumble and fall. His head struck against the mantle and he landed face downward in the roaring fire.

The bobbin lay safely on the floor.

Miss Angie screamed, and hurried across the room. But her first act was to pick up the bobbin and replace it safely on her work table, her second to try to drag her husband's corpse from the flames. Why in that order, she could not tell. She certainly didn't want or intend it that way.

When the constable and coroner arrived, little Miss Angie was back in the little, low rocker, sewing in patient resignation.

WELL, that's the story as I pieced it together from what Miss Angie told me that afternoon. It seemed incredibly credible at the time, with her honest, earnest, troubled eyes looking into mine. Now that I'm away from there, I just simply . . . do . . . not . . . know!

But one thing I'll bet. No other village can boast a professional seamstress worth ten million dollars. If the fates planned it as a reward to her, it was a useless gesture.

No, I did *not* let her do any sewing for me.

The Guard of Honor

BY PAUL SUTER

. . . on a couch beside the dead man in his coffin, he stretched out and went to sleep.

JUGRAND and Marvin agree that Craddock acted very strangely that night.

After growing sleepy and confused, staring into the fire in the lounging room of the clubhouse, he rose from his chair, passed through the double glass doors into the next room, and reclined beside Doctor Wilford Sawyer. Doctor Sawyer lay in his coffin.

Against the wall, paralleling the coffin, was a leather couch. It was on this couch that Craddock stretched himself out and went to sleep.

These three—Craddock, Marvin, and Jugrand—had been Wilford Sawyer's closest friends. In the course of years they had penetrated, though but slightly, behind the veil of his odd, aloof personality; witnessing gladly his rise to fame; standing by him now in death.

One of them—Craddock, the surgeon—had brought him back from the far-away spot where he had been found, dead; that spot to which he had fled madly, yet perhaps with a wisdom beyond sanity. Through the offices of all, he had been laid in state in the clubhouse, rather than in his own formal bachelor apartments. They were paying final homage to him as Guard of Honor, through that long night before the funeral.

Some time in the course of that night, ere his astounding exit into the other room, Craddock began to talk. Before that, nothing much beyond gloomy monosyllables had entered into the conversation.

Marvin the artist, had been pacing up and down the room, or sitting, bowed, in a Morris chair. Jugrand, professor of psychology for unreckoned years in the university, was crumpled inelegantly in a Turkish rocker. When he opened his half-shut eyes, the firelight glistened from their faded blue, bristled his white mustache to the point of grotesqueness, made his red cheeks seem frightfully puffy. All three of them were uneasy.

Something extraordinary hovered above their heads; a sense, it seemed, of some tremendous event hesitating on the threshold. Whatever they said took on significance and authority in proportion as it bore upon the breathless presence on the farther side of the glass doors. So it was that they listened intently—painfully—when Craddock started to tell of an informal party which he and Doctor Wilford Sawyer had attended together.

"In this room—a year ago. There must have been a dozen of us, more or less. Someone suggested that each of us tell something he did as a boy—some adventure—something out of the ordinary."

"As a boy—yes?" Marvin prompted, nervously.

He untwisted his lean legs from the Morris chair where he happened to be coiled, just then. He was suddenly on the alert.

"Someone suggested it; I don't remember who. And, without a word of explanation, Sawyer took his hat and coat and left the house."

Craddock paused and peered into the fire, as if the scene were reenacting and clarifying itself there.

"I followed," he went on. "We walked together back to his apartment. I can't recall his saying half-dozen words to me, the whole way. When we reached his place, we threw ourselves into chairs, with the lamp between us. We must have sat there half an hour before he began to talk."

"And then—?" It was Marvin again, sitting on the edge of the Morris chair, propping himself precariously with his long legs.

"Then he told me everything—everything that he knew, himself. It was not much; but it explained a good deal. I had suspected something of the sort."

Jugrand nodded, without interrupting. Craddock supported his absurdly delicate chin on his hand, still staring into the fire with tired eyes.

"It seems simple. I could tell it in ten why I should not—now. Yet, it's devilish, too. I thought, after he told it to me, sitting there by the lamp, that he was like the man in the New Testament—the one with the evil spirits. He was even worse off, for in his case the spirits had taken his life and ripped it squarely across."

Talk is infectious. Let one man, in a silent company such as that, start it, and soon all the others are eager to follow his example. Craddock paused, communing a little too long with memory; the uneasy atmosphere of expectancy settled lower over them; then, abruptly, the artist began to speak. Jugrand watched him, curiously.

"I remember an odd thing, now we're on the subject. It was one night when I was having a studio party. Sawyer dropped in. He put a queer question to me, that night. I was showing him a picture of mine—that one of Orpheus, with the rocks and trees in the background. He said to me, 'Suppose you forgot the background—what effect would that have on the picture?"

"Are you sure he said, 'forgot'—not, 'omitted,' or 'left out'?" Jugrand cut in.

words, and I suppose there is no reason

"I remembered the word because it was unusual for him," the artist returned. "He almost never used slang, you know."

"What did you tell him?"

Marvin shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't recall. He didn't carry the discussion any further. What puzzled me was the question, itself. Why should he have asked a question like that?"

No one answered. After a time, Jugrand rose, with an air of heavy resolution, ponderously adapted himself to a standing position, and walked over to the double glass doors. He looked through them, intently. The lines of thought gave his face something of power and charm, despite its fatness. The others stared at him, as he stared through the glass.

When he resumed his chair, which still

rocked gently, he addressed himself to the surgeon:

"I like to play sometimes with a theory —a fanciful theory—that the brain cells continue to work for a while after what we call death. Why do we call it that? Simply because our crude instruments can no longer detect signs of life. We have no proof but that decay—even embalming, perhaps—may precede death by an appreciable interval."

He stopped, with his eyes on the surgeon. It was as if he were feeling for some unthinkable result, grotesque, like his own fat cheeks. Craddock's narrow face looked pale and tired. He groped for a rocker, and fell into it, chin on hand. He stared steadfastly into the fire.

Jugrand asked him a quiet question:

"Do you suppose he was thinking of this trouble when he talked to Marvin about 'background'?"

"I think he must have been," Craddock answered, slowly. "Yes—'background' expresses it very well."

"Then 'forgot' was not slang."

The artist leaned forward. His sharp face was vivid with eagerness. In his excitement, he fished a gold case from a pocket, and had a cigarette between his lips before he recollected and threw it ruefully into the fire. Sawyer had not been a smoker.

The psychologist spoke again, gutturally:

"I am the only one of us who was here before he came. That was thirty years ago. His mother was with him—a tall, slender, silent lady. She died that same year."

"You knew them then?" the surgeon asked. His voice was drowsy.

Jugrand nodded.

"I attended her funeral. He looks very much like her. The clergyman had a hard time getting enough information for his address."

Marvin relaxed in a brief smile. There is grim humor in the professional funeral eulogy. Then, as if fulfilling a difficult duty, Craddock palpably roused himself and launched into the remainder of what he had to say.

"He told me, that night, of an illness he had had. I think he knew nothing himself of the details. In fact, I am not sure he would have been aware of the main event, even, but for his mother. *She* had told *him*. He had been desperately ill; and he had come out of the illness with his mind sponged clean, as a child wipes a slate. There was this difference, though: the slate is no more susceptible after the wiping than if nothing had ever been written upon it; his mind became *very* susceptible.

"I think, from what he told me, he must have preformed prodigies of learning. He had to start from the beginning, you understand—he remembered nothing; but his mother seems to have picked just the right instructors for him. She must have been rather wonderful, too—just as I maintain that he was. He traveled through his book learning at express train speed. At thirty, he had finished college, and had served his year in a hospital. He could not have been more than forty when he came to us, and even then, I believe, he had an enviable reputation."

Jugrand nodded.

"He had it from the first. He is not of common clay with the rest of us. He is one of the immortals."

"And this in spite of the fight that never ceased for a moment." Craddock emphasized.

The artist jerked his head, impatiently.

"*What* fight? I don't understand. Loss of memory is bad enough, of course; but his mother must have told him a good deal; he must have revisited the places he had forgotten."

"She told him this—" Craddock ticked off the points on his long forefinger—"that he had been desperately ill; that it would be best for him not to try to remember."

Jugrand quietly smiled, with the enjoyment of a connoisseur in oddities. Marvin started, and his eyes rounded.

"Do you mean to say—?" he began.

Craddock inclined his head.

"He made that perfectly clear to me, as we sat there with the lamp between us. She told him those two things. Never anything more. He must have tried desperately to learn more. From what he implied, I think there may have been painful scenes between them. But she died without telling."

"Then he never knew who he was, where

he came from—anything?" The artist fairly shot his questions.

"No."

JUGRAND spoke, deliberately choosing his words:

"I am interested in what he learned from himself—from his own mind. A man of his mentality cannot have let such a matter rest. He must have employed the various expedients of psychoanalysis."

"He did. That, in fact, was the fight I referred to. He told me. Also, he took the more obvious course of trying to find the hospital where he had been ill. But if he ever succeeded, no hospital admitted it. Possibly the right one had been enjoined to secrecy, through his mother's influence."

Craddock stopped, with the dejection of a man whose emotions weigh upon him. The others waited silently until he resumed:

"I must not go into all the details he confided. He had never disclosed his secret to anyone else, you see. When he did speak, he had forty years' silence to offset in one evening. But I can suggest this much to you, who knew him. You will agree with me that he had one of the great minds of his generation. Well, picture this man fighting desperately, with his back to the wall. Picture him in bed at night, after his day's practice. His identity—the thing he had lost which all other men had—possessed tremendous value for him. He fought for forty years, trying to recover it; and all the while, as he told me, it seemed that the key he wanted was only just beyond his reach. He believed that it appeared to him, sometimes, in dreams. He would waken just as the dreams slipped away. The thing must have become an obsession. And yet—he did his work. And then—"

"Yes?" the artist interjected, involuntarily.

"Then came the incident of two months ago. You are fairly familiar with it. He was operating; I assisting. He fainted, and I finished the operation. That was the beginning of his illness. He was more or less unconscious for the first month, and then the humiliating ending came. You know what I mean: while he was convalescing in the hospital—under the very eyes of us all—he walked out of the front door and disappeared."

"We know all that," Jugrand stated.

"Not quite all. You do *not* know that I received a letter from him. It was a bewildered, incoherent sort of letter. He must have written it on the train, and mailed it, which gave him time for what he wished to do. I was able to recover his body because of what he wrote in that letter. But there was other information in it, too. I learned from it that he had fainted at the operation because there had burst suddenly into his mind *the name of a little village in the Blue Ridge*. As soon as he was able, he escaped from the hospital and took train to that village. Near it, lying across the threshold of a ruined, charred house, I found him."

"That village was the place?" Jugrand suggested.

"I think it was the place he had been trying to recollect through forty years."

"How much besides the mere name did he remember?" pursued the psychologist.

"That, I fear, we shall never know," the surgeon answered.

Having said this, Craddock, who had been talking with a sort of forced, unnatural coherence, abruptly crumpled in his chair. His head dropped forward, and it appeared that he was about to faint. But before the others could assist him, he straightened, as suddenly as he had given way. He rose, holding to the mantel with one hand.

"I am tired," he said, simply.

He walked to the glass doors; opened them, slowly; passed into the other room. They heard his footsteps crossing the floor. The steps ceased, and there was a slight creaking sound.

Jugrand and Marvin sprang to their feet and ran to the doors. They stared for a space, in silence. It was Jugrand, at last, who took the artist by the arm and led the way back to the chairs before the fire. His heavy voice shook with excitement.

"You could see them both, in spite of the poor light?" he demanded.

Marvin nodded.

"Did you observe anything?"

The artist searched Jugrand's face for a hint of his meaning.

"I thought they looked very much alike, lying there," he said, at length.

Jugrand softly clapped his hands.

"That is it. They *are* alike! They are the same type—that sensitive, yet cold type, from which great surgeons are made. I have often thought that. I am gratified that you noticed it."

"How Craddock could lie down *there* —" The artist broke off, shuddering.

Jugrand laughed.

"It seems to you the living beside the dead—therefore bizarre. In his normal moments, it would seem so to him. Tonight, he is not normal. I am not so sure that he is even asleep—as we understand sleep. Perhaps he has been staring rather too steadily into the fire."

He went on, in a moment:

"I should like to have heard Craddock's theories. I, myself, have but one. Of course, I have suspected the truth for some time."

"What truth?" demanded Marvin.

"That this friend of ours—this dear and wonderful friend, who lies in his coffin—was suffering from loss of memory. My theory relates to the cause. That must have been an emotional catastrophe of the first order. There are only two such—love and death. Now, you will note that he never married; that he never seemed to consider the opposite sex, at all, except scientifically. That points to a subconscious inhibition—something in his original life which dried up the springs, so to speak. Maybe he had loved once, before memory left him—when he was, perhaps, eighteen or nineteen—and could not love again. There you have my theory."

Marvin was silent, staring moodily into the flames. Jugrand rose, and walking to the glass doors, slowly pushed them open. He spoke, softly:

"The one breathes heavily, and mutters in his dreams. The other is still; he would react to no test at present available to science. Yet, if the brain cells die last of all—"

He paused to laugh—the mirthless, sardonic laugh of the enthusiast, who covers his inward fire, away from the eyes of men:

"So many 'ifs'—'if' Craddock be self-hypnotized, as I think—'if' telepathy exist, independently of our thoughts concerning it—'if' the brain cells die last—"

His voice trailed into silence. Presently, he turned to the artist.

"Come!" he commanded.

Together, the two of them passed through the doorway. They stood beside the dead man, looking down at him who slept.

Outside, the wind before the dawn was rising.

DAWN.

Dr. Craddock moaned in his sleep, struggled a little, opened his eyes. Jugrand and Marvin stood at the foot of the couch, as they had been standing, tensely, ever since they had come through the double doors. In that time, they had not spoken; but as words muttered by the sleeper had impinged upon their senses, they had looked at each other. There was that which was inexplicable in some of the words; that which Craddock, the surgeon, could not normally have dreamed.

The psychologist came forward. To do so, he had to pass between the couch and that place of more profound repose which was temporarily in the room. He laid his hand on the surgeon's forehead.

"All right, Craddock?" he inquired, softly.

The awakening man trembled, slightly.

"Yes, yes—of course," he answered. "I fell asleep; and dreamed."

The artist was about to say something, but Jugrand held up a warning finger. Craddock went on, a half-sob in his voice:

"I can't understand it. I wasn't here, at all. I wasn't myself. I was . . ."

He stopped and sat up, one long hand covering his eyes. Jugrand waited. It was very still.

Suddenly, the wind awakened. Craddock started, and rose unsteadily to his feet.

"I fear I have been very discourteous," he said, in his natural tones. "I seem to have been asleep. I must have dreamed, too."

"How much of your dream do you remember?" the psychologist asked.

The surgeon stared fixedly ahead of him. At last, he shook his head.

"None; none, whatever," he declared. "Before you questioned me, I could have

sworn it was in my mind. But there is not a thing now that I can lay hold of."

His gaze wandered, and reached the face in the coffin. He advanced a few steps, and looked down, absorbedly. His pale, vivid countenance regarded one that was paler, though hardly more still; whose fire was gone.

Very gently, the psychologist touched him on the shoulder, his voice rumbling softly beneath the beating of the wind:

"You spoke at intervals in your sleep—an old man—brown smoke from a chimney—Lucia—Do you remember now?"

A shiver passed through the surgeon; a long, subtle undulation of the senses. He answered in a whisper, his gaze still bent on the unchanging features of Doctor Sawyer:

"I remember."

Jugrand's blue eyes gleamed. His voice was heavy with controlled emotion.

"Tell it!" he whispered.

His notebook was out. He drew up a chair and waited, saying no further word that might break the spell. Craddock's eyes had not left the face in the coffin. After a time, he began to talk. They did not leave it then.

Thus it was, in the far end of that strange night—in the windy dawn—that Craddock told his dream.

DOCTOR WILFORD SAWYER'S step tottered a little, as he left the train. He was a thin, tremulous old man, with eager eyes.

Though the weight of recent illness bore heavily upon him, the spirit had power to hold him to his purpose. He looked with a child's wide gaze at the village he was entering.

So far as his memory served, it was entirely unfamiliar. Yet no native could have proceeded with more apparent certainty. He barely hesitated by the railroad right-of-way, sizing up the crowd of houses huddled about the one general store, their back yards elbowing off the insistent forest; then he started forward confidently, and struck into a little zigzag path which led off among the trees.

He felt strangely buoyant. Something within him sang and shouted, so that he had to restrain himself from giving echoing expression to its exuberance. His feet, accustomed to city pavements, trod the live turf as if that were the one carpet they had always known. The trees seemed com-

panionable; old friends, almost. When the path ran closely enough between them, he stretched out his hands to touch their trunks, one on each side, and thrilled with the feel of their shaggy bark.

Even the rapid twilight failed to shake his sense of comfortable security. He lost the path, but continued on between the trees. Night began to muffle them, but he kept on, breathlessly. Stars budded above their tops before his wanderings brought him definitely, at last, to the edge of a broad valley.

A nearly circular amphitheatre spread before him. It had been leveled of trees, but the giant forests rose, tier after tier, on the hills around it. From behind the uttermost of these hills, the moon had risen, and the nearer half of the valley's waving grass glistened in its light, though the farther portion still slept in the shadow.

The doctor gazed at this scene with an amazement which gripped him by the throat, as sometimes the first breath of ether had done, when he had hurried into an operating room, out of the cold air. The beauty and poetry of that dim landscape entered his blood. But at last his eyes broke with the subtle moonlight of the valley, and fixed themselves, instead, on that which lay in the valley's center. It was a house—a long, low mansion, of stately yet irregular design.

The place seemed entirely dark. While he stared, however, a chink of light appeared for an instant. And, as his gaze focused more precisely, he perceived a ribbon of brown smoke which twisted lazily upward in the moonlit haze, and dissolved into the background of the hills.

It may have been a moment that he stood motionless at the edge of the valley. It may have been an hour. For that space, whatever it was, he had shaken off the trammels of time. His heart was laid open, as if some super-surgeon had stolen upon him in the moonlight. He was waiting. When that which he awaited came, he felt it as a thrill within his breast, which compelled him to rush eagerly down the valley's slope, and to stop, breathless, before the door of the mansion. It moved him, then, to lift the ancient knocker, and send the echoes in a multitudinous, prying battalion down the dark hallways within.

He had sent them again before heavy footsteps responded. There was the scraping of a bar, and the sound of chains unloosing; and the door opened.

The doctor bowed, gravely, in the moonlight; and the old man in the doorway also bowed, with an ever graver courtesy. He was a giant of a man, whose long, white beard and slightly bent shoulders proclaimed his years. In the yellow light of the candle he carried, his eyes gleamed with sombre vigor. Though the hand which held the handle shook, his voice was free from the cackling quality of age. It was deep and booming, rather, like the sea.

"You are welcome, sir," he said, simply after a moment's scrutiny. "Will you be pleased to enter?"

For the space of a breath, just at that instant, the doctor's sense of security failed him. He placed his hand on his heart, with the gesture of a very sick man, and began to apologize:

"I can't intrude upon you in this way. I can't—"

But the old man interrupted him, repeating:

"Be pleased to enter, sir."

With that, the thrill swept again through the doctor's soul. His pulses trembled. There was a solemn enthusiasm, very deep within him. He bowed, and stepped over the threshold.

"I will secure the door, if you will pardon me," the old man observed, punctiliously.

Having done so, he shuffled ahead into the soft, brown gloom of the hallway. They passed dark chambers on either side, into each of which the candle thrust a flitting yellow finger; but there was no other light until, still advancing, they turned into a room at the end of the passage.

The doctor paused a moment in the doorway. The thrill was beating rhythmically on his brain. He strained his eyes until they ached sharply, in an unreasonable effort to accomplish with them something which he could not have defined; but they merely registered, unforgettably, the details of the scene before him.

What he saw was a room, with a lofty, broad-beamed ceiling, and walls of shadowy paneled oak. Against the walls, in stiff attitudes, a trio of high-backed chairs stood guard. In a dark corner hid an idle spinning-wheel. A long, wooden bench stretched itself in the warmth before the fireplace—with a little, old lady sitting precisely in the middle of it. And over the whole, dividing the shadows from the mellow glow, brooded the radiance of the crackling logs.

The old lady rose from the bench before the fire and advanced, smilingly, to meet him. She was a very ancient little dame. Her quaint, full dress might have been the fashion in the dim days of her girlhood. Her curtsey, too, retained a flavor of those days. The doctor found himself bowing even more ceremoniously than he had done for the old gentleman; and he felt that old-world formality very pleasing. It stirred no chord in his memory—the courtly old pair were strangers to him; yet, as he greeted them, something generous and glowing pulsed through his veins; something akin to that hot, soon-passing fire which is youth.

"You are late again," chided a soft voice, out of the shadows.

The doctor wheeled, suddenly. He had not seen this girl. She must have been sitting very quietly in the lee of the fireplace. She stood now in the ruddy glow, and regarded him with a pouting smile. Her eyes were deep violet, but the firelight darkened them to black. Her face was rose and ivory. As her gaze met his; her delicate under lip, which had been drawn inward with the pout, struggled into freedom, and let the smile have its way without hindrance.

"I suppose I must forgive you," she exclaimed, with a toss of her head. "Will you be pleased to sit beside me on the bench, and talk to me, sir? Waiting is weary work, you know and I have been practising it a long time."

"I must have been lost in the woods," the doctor defended, rather shamefacedly.

"*You*—lost in *these* woods?" She laughed, frankly, and, seizing his hand in her own firm little one, dragged him unresisting to the bench. There she plumped down, and took both of his hands in hers, the better to emphasize, by patting them, the fact that she was scolding him soundly.

"What will you say next? Each night you've the most ridiculous excuse in the world. Then, the very next time, you come with a worse. Don't you know, sir, that lovers should be ahead of their hour, and not tardy?"

The doctor was aware that the old couple had excused themselves. He was alone with the girl. Of other facts, however—even more obvious—he was strangely unaware. He had no feeling that the girl was speaking wildly. There was nowhere in his horizon any sense of incongruity. With the first of her words—at the mere sound of her voice—he had lost all possibility of that. The fire coursing through his veins was authentic. He was a young man. Remembering nothing, he still knew that this was the place where he should be.

"Yet I *was* lost," he insisted, obstinately.

Her eyes sobered. She leaned toward him, until her warm breath was on his cheek, and looked up into his face, with a sort of fright.

"Wilford! Do you mean to tell me you're not joking? If you're not, then you are ill; for you know these woods better than I."

"I *was* lost; but I've found myself, now!" he answered her, with an abrupt burst of gayety. "I've found myself, Lucia!"

"Did you ever lose yourself, then, silly boy?" she retorted.

It was a simple question, but it shook the doctor. His mind, which had seemed very steady, swayed a little, and he saw the girl and the room and the crackling logs through a mist. Then the steadiness returned. She was regarding him with a mischievous smile, which had, withal, something to wonder in it. He smiled back into her violet eyes, and, with sudden deftness, imprisoned the hand that had been patting his.

"Lucia!"

She was silent; but her smile became deeper. There was a hint in it, too, of wistfulness and pain.

"Tell me—" he began; then he stopped.

What was it he wished her to tell him? It was perfectly natural that he should be there on the bench with her. There was no mystery in that. Yet why, then, were they so strange toward each other? They should have been chatting unrestrainedly and gaily, as they always did. No two people in the world could be more intimate than they were. He knew the white soul behind those violet eyes. He knew—

Then he began to talk. It seemed that the realization of that constraint was all he had needed. He talked; and so did she—though mostly she listened, her ivory cheeks alternately suffused with color, and pale. That which they said was chiefly expressed in tones of the voice, in glances, in subtle interchange more delicate and evanescent than words. One fragment, only remained of their constraint: which was, that he contented himself with looking into her quickened face, and with pressing her hands between both of his.

So it grew late; and, becoming aware of familiar heavy footsteps, the doctor glanced up, to find the old gentleman smiling down at him, while the little, old lady hovered hospitably in the rear.

"I have kindled a fire in your room," the old gentleman announced, in his booming voice. "One trip up the stairs is enough for me. When you are ready, Lucia will show you there."

"He is ready now, grandfather," said the girl, rising; and, with her words, the doctor knew, suddenly, that he was, indeed, very tired.

His hand sought his heart again, and he smiled somewhat vaguely about him. Lucia lighted two candles which were on the mantel, and, giving him one, took the other, herself. He was tired; but, nevertheless, he felt unconquerably young. He responded to the stately leave-taking of the old gentleman and the old lady almost with the forced gayety of a boy bidding his elders good-night.

He followed Lucia through the doorway, her slender, white-clad figure tripping before him up the narrow stairs. When they reached the hallway above, broad and heavy-timbered, he walked beside her, and looked into her steady eyes; but in the flickering yellow light of the candle, she seemed unsubstantial. In spite of that evening's intimacy, there was a gulf between them. He yearned to speak, yet walked in silence.

She stopped, at length, before an open doorway near the far end of the hall, from which came the glow of a fire.

"This is your room," she said. "I hope you will sleep well, Wilford. Good-night."

He did not answer, at once. Instead, he stood in the doorway, and looked into her face. Very slowly, like a man in a dream, he advanced toward her. She trembled, but did not retreat. In the yellow circle of candle-light, she was more than ever like a figure in ivory.

He extended his arms. She leaned slightly toward him. Then an instantaneous change crossed her face. It seemed the expression of one who remembers a half-forgotten and terrible truth. She turned, with a little cry, and ran back down the passage.

He watched her candle-light, swiftly receding, until it was gone.

HE ENTERED the room, heavily; but the war comfort of its greeting, as he looked slowly about it, revived him, and brought back something of the cheer of the evening he had spent on the bench before the fire.

It was a beautifully old-fashioned room with a four-poster bed, equally ancient, which stood at right angles to the wall on one side of the crackling fireplace. On the other was an oaken wardrobe, with a top higher than the doctor could reach. He essayed the feat, in youthful exuberance, and paid for it the next moment when he sank down upon the bed, hand on heart. The discomfort was quickly gone, however, and he rose to look out of the broad-silled window at the valley below.

The grass waved and glistened in the moonlight. In the distance, the circle of woods enclosed it, like a dark horizon line. The moon had mounted higher, but its slanting rays were not yet entering his chamber. No living thing moved within sight. The quiet of the scene increased the drowsiness of which he had hardly been aware, so that he found it hard to keep awake until his sleepy fingers had per-

formed their task of undressing, and he was in bed.

Strangely, however, he did not fall asleep. Instead, he lay with utter restfulness, watching the dance of firelight and shadows on the high ceiling. He was conscious of the slow approach of the moonlight, through the window. He was gratefully aware of the dark woods outside, the waving grass. . . .

His mind smoothed itself out. Emotion left him. Awake, tolerantly receptive of whatever might come, he seemed to himself at the pinnacle of the years, with life graciously falling away on either side. For the first time, it might have been said of the doctor that his mind was free. Nothing tapped at its door.

Gently, and with infinite gradation, then, into that free mind came memory—memory without emotion; memory which he had prayed and struggled for, in bitter night watches, but which he now received with calmness.

He knew this valley. Of course, he knew it. He had been a boy, not far from here. On his way to the village, he had passed regularly through the valley, had stopped at this house, had even spent the night here, many times. Surely, there was nothing in his after life as familiar as this place! It was curious—but he thought this apathetically—that he should not have remembered it until now.

That was as far as his mind would go, for the time. It pieced together a thousand incidents of his boyhood, and made them more real than the trees or the moonlight. It made them vivid, but declined to go beyond them. Instead, it took a prodigious jump, and began to associate itself with his later life—the life he had remembered all along.

Yet in this nemonic chamber there was a difference, too. He discovered within himself an astonishing new facility at pushing out its walls. His recollections had never extended to the days prior to his second school life. Now, he was able to proceed farther. He saw himself undergoing insistent coaching, at the hands of expert professors, until, bit by bit, his early education was reestablished, though memory of early things had not come with it. He made an effort—his mind seemed astonishingly acrobatic—and remembered long days and nights in a hospital, where he had been not a doctor but a patient. They were vague days and nights, merging on the nearer side into his phase of education, on the other, dwindling off into obscurity. No effort of his could bring light into that obscurity; but within it, at first dimly, then with sharper definition as he came into charted water, he could see his mother's face.

He saw it there, not with the expression of mingled pain and triumph it had worn in later years, but struggling, struggling. . . .

He spent freely of that restful period, between sleep and waking, in fascinated observance of her face; watching its incessant battling, as it fought its way through misery and despair to ultimate victory. He knew the battle had been for him, but why he could not tell. In one flash of vivid vision, he saw himself coping terrifically with the specter of insanity. He saw marching columns of dead men—ancestors of his, who had lived bravely—coming to fight by his side. They were conjured up by his mother, who agonized with him on her knees at his bedside.

He saw them, and knew that with their aid—with *her* aid—he had won; but these were his Pillars of Hercules on that side. He could not see beyond them.

There was a little period when he lay, with dulling thoughts, almost asleep. He shut his eyes, and communed pleasantly with his mind. He opened them to find his memory back at the boyhood days, working forward from the place where it had left him before.

Suddenly, emotion came with it—hot, palpitating emotion. Lucia! How could he have forgotten her for an instant? He sat up in bed, and stared about the room. This was the house. She had come to live with her grandparents. He had met her here.

Then, one after another, like silver bells, they returned to him: the hours he had spent with her. Nothing was omitted; her lightest words were not too trifling to be remembered. They came back with the brilliance of summer days, the glamour of

moonlit nights. He recalled the very trees they had walked among. He remembered a path, back of the house, which they had used. Had there been more light, he could have found it then. He determined to look for it in the morning.

Once, he laughed aloud, when, recollecting a tall pine which had been a landmark with them, he saw its top through the window against the sky, towering above the black line of trees. Nothing was lost; nothing. The past was all his. There was one night, one lovely night. . . .

The vision ceased, and sleep came, like the snapping of a thread; but with it, dreams. They were vague, confused dreams, shot through with mystery.

Something began calling him, from far away; something terrible, though remote. It approached, with marching footsteps. He, too, was advancing, through the corridors of sleep to meet it. He struggled as he went, and averted his face. He awoke, at last, with the sweat of a chill horror upon him.

There was no transition stage. He was broad awake, at once—awake, and an old man again. He was an old man, whose bones ached, and he was staring, with eyes heavy with terror, at an incredible thing.

Moonlight flooded the room. It came through a great gap in the roof. There was no fire in the fireplace, no tapestry on the wall. The wardrobe doors had fallen from rusty hinges. He straightened painfully on one elbow, to find that the bed on which he had been lying was little more than a frame, spanned by worm-eaten slats. A tarnished candlestick, without a candle, stood on the mantel. *The room was in ruins.*

HALF-BLINDED by the staggering horror which enveloped him, he stumbled into his clothes and groped his way to the door. Though he had bolted it before going to bed, it was open, hanging from one hinge.

The moonlight entered the hall, for most of the roof was gone. Somehow, with great jumps down the broken stairway, he reached the lower floor, and his steps brought him to the room where the two of them had spent their pleasant evening.

The moon shone here, too. It showed him a ruined fireplace, a stone floor, four blackened walls.

For a moment, his eyes wandered to and fro, regarding the room with nightmare fascination; then he turned, mechanically, and walked down the ruinous hall, through the crumbling doorway, into the valley. He knew this for reality. He had come, the night before to this burned house; he had sat on that remnant of a bench, before that cold fireplace; he had lain, and felt that he was resting comfortably, on the charred slats of that bed. All the rest had been in his mind merely; all the rest.

He clapped his hands to his head as the last shred of memory came. He saw the house in flames. He was within it again, tearing his way through fire and suffocation, to rescue her. He was callering her name, desperately, hysterically, with a voice that rose to a shriek. Now he was flinging himself into the flames to die by her side. He recognized this for the memory his mother had kept from him; but he possessed it only for that supreme moment. Then mercy intervened.

For he was young again. The mad hot fire of youth coursed exultantly through his veins. Before him, in the dusk, the lights of illusion twinkled in the windows of the mansion. Brown smoke twisted lazily upward from its chimney—the smoke of long ago. With a cry, he ran back. He knocked at the door.

Though his hand clutched at his heart, the action was instinctive. He was not aware. He knocked again, until the echoes, an eager, hurrying throng, danced up and down the hallways. He thundered once more and, with the other hand, tore away his collar.

Within, light, lilting footsteps responded. Chains were loosened. A bolt shot back. The door opened.

He was content merely to stand motionless a moment, and look; but it was his soul which looked. For that part of him which had been old and forgetful, subject to time and disease, had fallen heavily across the threshold.

After living with a man for twenty-five years, naturally his every gesture was unmistakeable—even in a pelican!

Lovers' Meeting

BY HAROLD LAWLOR

WELL, you know how it is. A fellow hates to give his wife credit for anything. But I have to admit it was Nell who unearthed the first clue to the mystery.

"Hindus!" Nell said excitedly, out of the blue. "Hindus, George!"

My head swiveled toward her. I wondered if she were going crazy, too; if there were something in the balmy Florida air that addled the wits. For some time we'd been sitting in our car, diagonally parked on the Municipal Pier at St. Petersburg, watching with distressed eyes the baffling antics of Carl Gray and what was, apparently, his inamorata.

Befuddled as I was already by this seeming insanity of my old friend Carl's, I assure you I was in no receptive mood for enigmatic remarks from my own wife.

Of course, the story really begins earlier, with the disturbing change in Maude Gray, Carl's wife, and her unfathomable reference to pelicans.

Pelicans, forsooth! It was enough to destroy the mental equilibrium of anybody!

Maude and Carl, Nell and I are all well into the shady side of sixty, and we've been friends for many years. Maude we've known only for the past twenty-five years that she has been married to Carl; but Carl has been our friend since Nell and I were first married, forty-odd years ago, when we and Carl were all in our twenties.

When Carl retired, a few years back, he and Maude moved from Chicago to St. Petersburg, where they bought a small house, planning to spend their declining years in a more salubrious climate than Chicago has to offer. Carl really hadn't wanted to move down there, and Nell and I knew why. Florida had been the site of an event that caused life-long grief to Carl. But of this Maude was ignorant, and in the end she had her way, as she always did. Nell and I missed them sorely, of course, for we were all poor correspondents, and we looked forward eagerly to the day when we should see them again.

At last, in the winter of 1949, Nell and I drove down there. We had wired them that we were coming, but knowing that their house was small and that they would insist upon putting us up anyway to the discomfort of all four of us, Nell and I obviated that by stopping at a very nice motel on 4th Street, North.

IT WASN'T until after we'd engaged a room and cleaned up a bit that we drove down to Central Avenue and west to the neighborhood in which the Grays were living. As we passed through the business section, Nell and I craned our necks at all the green benches, placed on the sidewalks at right angles to the curbs, bearing their cargoes of elderly people basking in the sunshine.

Grandmothers in sun-suits, slacks or backless dresses; their elderly sun-tanned consorts flaunting sport shirts of wild and improbable designs and hues. Fat, thin, bent,

erect, silent or talkative; all of them old. Despite the gay apparel, perhaps anyone young might have found it a melancholy scene, but Nell and I were enchanted.

"Look, dear!" Nell exclaimed. "Some of them older than us. And don't they all look happy? Oh, I wish we could come down here to live, too."

"Two more good years like the last one," I promised, "and maybe we can."

Well, we found Maude and Carl in their little shingled bungalow on the west side, and naturally we expected to see them looking wonderfully well, too.

In Carl's case, we certainly weren't disappointed. He's a short man, much smaller and fatter than I am, with a thin fringe of silvery hair around the perimeter of his bald head, and a bustling, gesticulating, chirrupy manner. He was sunburned now to a ruddy tan, and I hadn't seen him looking so well and happy in forty years.

"Why, George Phelps, you ole hoss-thief, you!" he greeted me, pumping my hand enthusiastically. "Come in, come in!" And he grabbed Nell to plant a loud kiss on her plump cheek.

But I was conscious, even then, of a feeling that he wasn't really glad to see us. It's hard to explain why I felt as I did. Superficially he was the same as ever, but I sensed a change. His enthusiasm seemed forced, and though he bustled and gesticulated as energetically as ever, it was an exaggeration of his old manner, like a subtle caricature.

Then, too, we needed only one look at Maude to see that something was wrong. She was hovering in the background, letting Carl do the greeting, instead of insinuating herself before him and taking charge of the moment as she had always used to do. But, even so, I had a greater faith in the genuineness of her welcome. She was tearfully glad to see us, and the tears were another surprise, for she'd never been an emotional woman.

Big-bosomed, big-hipped, she'd had a manner as firm and decisive as her tread. I wouldn't say that she'd ever hen-pecked Carl exactly, for he wasn't the hen-pecked type. But the fact remains that she used to tell him what to do with a plethora of instructions, and he would do his best to execute them, for he was an amiable sort, and easy-going.

Once in the house, we could see that Maude hadn't entirely broken herself of this old habit. She was giving Carl a flurry of directions for our comfort, and making us decidely uncomfortable while she was about it.

"Take their wraps, dear. Hang them in the hall closet. Move that cigarette table a little closer to George. Push that chair forward for Nell. See if there's ginger ale in the ice box, and—"

BUT there was a change that seemed to us dramatic.

Even while she was uttering her instructions, her voice drifted away to nothing, and her shaking hand went to her trembling lips, and a peculiar, helpless expression of frustration crept over her face.

For Carl was ignoring her completely!

You would have to have known the Grays as long and as well as Nell and I had to realize how shocking that was to us. We couldn't help but exchange stunned glances, and I could tell from the expression on Nell's face that she had been puzzled from the beginning, too, by the change in Maude.

It wasn't that Maude had dramatically wasted away, though she had palpably lost weight. It was her manner that had altered so strikingly. She was faltering, uncertain of herself, and there was a haunted look about her. For Carl, who'd been the most devoted of husbands, seemed to regard her coldly whenever he looked her way, and it was obvious that this was not lost on Maude, for she shrank back in her chair whenever his eyes fell upon her.

It was most distressing to us, of course, though we pretended not to notice that anything was amiss. One does. But the change in the Grays, the seemingly strained relations between them, rather clouded our reunion, and suggested to us the wisdom of cutting our first meeting short.

Something mystifying happened just before we left. Carl had taken our empty ginger ale glasses to the kitchen, when Maude leaned forward nervously on her

chair, held her finger against her lips like a child enjoining secrecy, and hissed:

"Pelicans!"

The whispered word seemed to burst from her by main force. While Nell and I still stared, Carl re-entered the living room, and I'm certain he'd heard what Maude had said, for he darted her a glance of furious reproach. At which she positively cowered in her chair!

By now the atmosphere had become so uncomfortable that Nell and I pleaded tiredness from the long drive down, made an engagement with them for the following day, and gladly took our leave.

WE HAD a little private talk about it, Nell and I, once we were black in our room at the motor court.

"I simply can't get over it, Nell said, vigorously slapping cold cream into her plump pink cheeks.

"Pelicans!" I snorted, as I wound my watch. "Has the woman gone daft?"

"I wouldn't be a bit surprised. Why, Maude acts as if she were afraid of Carl! She's lost all her self-confidence. George, dear," Nell's blue eyes narrowed, "do you suppose there could be a—another woman?"

"Ye gods!" I hooted. "At his age?"

"No fool like an old fool, is what I always say. There's certainly something wrong. Why, Carl used to be the most devoted husband, waiting on Maude hand and foot. Now he acts as if he didn't care about her at all."

"Well, comes to that," I rubbed my chin, "we know he never was in love with Maude. Told us that himself, time he married her twenty-five years ago. That he was marrying only for a home and companionship. That he'd never really gotten over Rose Morley."

"I know," Nell said sadly. "Poor Rose!"

"That's why I'm sure it's not another woman now. Carl is a faithful sort, a one-woman man if I ever saw one. Even if he could be unfaithful to Maude, he could never be guilty of infidelity to Rose Morley's memory."

"Well, something is wrong," Nell said again energetically, "and I'm not going to stand by and watch that marriage fall apart, after all these years and at their age. I'm going to *do* something about it!"

"What?"

"Oh, keep still!" Nell said crossly. "Go on in and take your shower!"

It's so unusual for Nell to be cross that I could judge for myself the extent of her anxiety about the Grays.

I couldn't sleep that night. While Nell snored placidly at my side (though she's insisted for forty years that she doesn't snore!), I lay rigidly still so as not to disturb her, and helplessly let my memories plague me into wakefulness. I know it had been mention of Rose Morley that made me re-live those spectral years.

MORE than forty years ago, Rose Morley was an aerialist with a small traveling circus. In winter, while the circus hibernated, it had been Rose's thrifty habit to play the minor vaudeville circuits, and it was while she was filling a two-week engagement at the Orpheus Theater that she met Carl, who was then night clerk at the Haddon House where Rose was rooming during her stay.

It was a whirling romance. They fell in love at once, which was understandable enough if you knew Rose. She was a gay and vivacious redhead with a very warm and engaging manner. A half-hour with Rose and you felt you knew her better than others with whom you'd spent a lifetime. Some people are like that.

Well, Nell and I, newly-weds ourselves, fell in love with her, too, when Carl brought her out to the house and proudly announced their engagement. He was beside himself with happiness, bustling joyfully about, asking at intervals, "Well, what do you think of her, eh? I'm a pretty good picker, eh?", cocking his head to one side in that way of his as he awaited our smiling answers.

All the while they were with us, when he could sit still at all, he perched on the arm of Rose's chair, with one arm possessively around her. She'd lay her head against his arm and caress it with her cheek, interrupting this only to nod solemn and emphatic approval at intervals as Carl outlined their plans. You would have thought

his every slightest utterances the pronunciamento of a sage.

I've never seen two people more unreservedly and unabashedly in love.

I remember asking Nell afterward, "Good night, we weren't that bad when we were engaged, I hope?"

"I'm afraid we were, dear," Nell giggled.

The plan was that Rose would fulfil her present vaudeville engagement, and play one more season with the circus for which she had already contracted. By the time the circus worked its way north again, it would be fall, and she and Carl would be married.

But Fate stepped in, as Fate has a way of doing. At the circus' third engagement of the season, in a small Florida town, Rose fell from her trapeze and was killed instantly.

Once the initial shock wore off, Carl, a little grim-lipped, never mentioned her again, but applied himself strenuously to his work. We allowed him a decent interval of a year in which to hug his grief, and then, after our daughter, Harriet, was born, Nell decided Carl had mourned long enough and it was time for her to take matters into her own hands.

You know how women are.

"Carl ought to marry," Nell decided, "but how is he going to meet a nice girl if he makes no effort to go out and find one? I'll just have to handle everything."

So, in that artfully artless way of women, she began inviting Carl to dinner once a week, and "just happened" to invite some one of her unmarried girl friends at the same time. We paraded the lot before him, and there were quite a few.

"And how did you like Ann?" Nell would ask him a few nights afterward.

"Who?"

Nell stifled impatience. "*Ann!* Who had dinner with us Thursday night."

"Oh, yes. Ann!" Carl would say, maddeningly to Nell.

"She's a perfectly lovely girl."

"Isn't she?" Carl would agree, with genuine enthusiasm.

But that was as far as it ever went. He never made any attempt to see Ann again. Or Pearl, or Lillian, or Florence, or Jane, or whoever. Once out of sight, they apparently slipped from his mind completely.

I thought Nell would "blow her top", as the youngsters say. Five years of this, and even she gave up.

"It's no use," she decided wearily at last. "Carl is looking to find another girl exactly like Rose, and of course he never will."

I thought so, too. But in this we were quite wrong. For, seventeen years after Rose's death, when Carl was forty-one and we had definitely given up hope that he would ever marry at all, he met and married a school-teacher, Maude Wayne, who was the antithesis of the long-dead Rose in every way.

"No, I'm not in love with her," he told us once when we were alone with him, "but she'll never find that out from me. She thinks she's the first woman I ever loved, and for the sake of her own happiness—well, I'd rather she'd continue to think so. That's why I want your solemn promise that you'll never tell her about Rose."

Of course we promised. We even thought he was wise, for Maude, blessedly reassured of her own attractiveness and blooming with this late marriage, might have tormented herself and made them both miserable with jealousy of Carl's lost love.

For twenty-five years, they were as happy as any married couple we knew. And we grew genuinely fond of Maude, once we grew used to her harmless, bossy little ways, though of course she never filled the place of Rose in the hearts of any of us.

I sighed now, and turned over in bed. Funny how vividly I could remember Rose after all these years, and that way she had had of affectionately rubbing her cheek against Carl's arm, and nodding solemnly, though she was not a solemn person. And I decided that she was one of those people who make indelible impressions.

And with that, my snores must have joined Nell's own, for I fell sound asleep.

THE next three days were pleasant enough. But, though the Grays seemed more like their old selves, we weren't deceived. We were made occasionally aware in little ways of a veil of secrecy surround-

ing them, though we learned nothing of what they were hiding. Oh, Nell did what she could to sound out Maude, but she met with failure.

"Maude simply won't tell me a thing," Nell reported. "If you ask me, I think Carl warned her not to."

"Well, let's just enjoy ourselves," I said, "and we can keep our eyes open while we're doing it. Sooner or later, things are bound to come to a head."

It really wasn't just curiosity on our part, though I'm afraid it sounds so. We were anxious to play peace-makers, if we could.

But as I've said, the three following days passed pleasantly enough. Nell and I would drive over to the Grays early in the morning, park our car under their car porte, and then we'd all pile into Carl's car while he took us around to the points of interest.

We spent lazy, sunny times on the Gulf beaches across the causeway. We saw Clearwater, and the sponge fisheries at Tarpon Springs. We drove over the beautiful Gandy Bridge to Tampa, where we visited Ybor City and lunched on spicy Cuban food that gave us heartburn.

One thing, though, we never dined with the Grays; an omission which became noticeable. For some reason known only to himself, Carl made a great point of always being back in St. Petersburg by late afternoon, and we wouldn't see him again before eight o'clock in the evening. Twice, when we suggested having dinner together, Carl made lame and evasive replies, which served to arouse our curiosity mildly.

However, it wasn't until the third afternoon that something happened to recall our small mystery. I was the unwitting cause of it. There was one omission in our travels that had puzzled me a little.

"You're certainly showing us all the sights, Carl," I said, "but what of this Million Dollar Pier of yours that I've heard so much about? How come you've never shown it to us? Do you really have one, or is it just some pipe-dream of the Chamber of Commerce?"

We were in Carl's car when I said it, Nell and I in the back seat, the Grays in front, and it was impossible to understand the peculiar effect my innocent remark caused on the two in the front seat. There was a sudden strained silence, a curious stiffening of both of them. You would have thought I had said something obscene.

I could see Carl dart a sidelong glance at Maude, as if he suspected she'd been talking out of turn again. Maude's look in return seemed to be an odd mixture of denial and apology. She took a Kleenex from the box under the glove compartment, and wiped her perspiring face. And I felt it wasn't the heat alone that prompted her to make the gesture.

"Uh, the Pier," Carl said, when the silence had grown over-long.

"Yes. Where is it?"

He waved a hand vaguely. "Oh, it's east of town, jutting out into Tampa Bay."

"Well, what do you say we drive over there? Maybe we'll find a cooler breeze."

Again that little silence before he answered, as if he were marshalling his words. "Well, it's getting pretty late. Nearly half past three, and I have some, uh, business to attend to."

Some imp of perversity made me persist. "Well, Nell and I would certainly like to see it. Maybe tomorrow?"

I had the peculiar feeling that Carl was grateful for even so short a respite as twenty-four hours. "Maybe," he said. "We'll certainly have to show you the Pier. Tomorrow, or—or soon."

I said no more, but when I looked aside at Nell, she closed one eye knowingly. We went back to the Grays and retrieved our car, and said we'd meet them that night on a bench in front of Walgreen's. Maude was fluttering more uncertainly than ever, as she and Nell went into the house for a moment, but Carl had apparently recovered from his discomposure, for he talked casually enough to me of inconsequential matters until Nell reappeared.

She and I started to drive back to the motel, and Nell was talking excitedly the minute we were out of ear-shot of the Grays.

"I knew it!" she said triumphantly. "The minute I saw how strangely they both acted when you mentioned the Pier, I knew that whatever has been bothering both of them is bound up in some way with the Pier.

And do you know what? While Maude and I were powdering our noses just now, she begged me to ask you not to mention the Pier again!"

"For the love of Mike!" I said. "What can the Pier have to do with it? Unless you were right in the first place, and old Carl has been meeting some woman there."

"That's what I hinted to Maude, as tactfully as I could. I told her we couldn't help but notice there was something wrong between her and Carl, and I had wondered if he were interested in another woman. Well, Maude broke down completely then. She said she'd been under an awful strain. And she said no, it wasn't another woman. She said it was worse. She said—" Nell broke off, and looked at me wide-eyed.

"What?"

"She said it was a pelican!"

FOR some reason, that tickled my funny-bone. I guffawed.

"Don't laugh!" Nell said sharply. "I tell you, if you'd seen Maude when she said it, you'd know it wasn't funny. She said, too, that we're mixed up in it some way."

"*We* are? Oh, come now! Why, I never even saw a pelican, outside a zoo. And I certainly can't see any connection between a pelican and Carl. How can she think we have anything to do with it? Pete's sake, we've been twelve hundred miles away all this time!"

"That's what I told her," Nell said. "And she was terribly disappointed, for she said she thought I'd know and could tell her, but of course I couldn't. But, she said, when Carl received our telegram saying we were coming down here, he simply went up in the air. For some strange reason, he made her swear not to mention the Pier or pelicans to us. She's broken her promise to him, of course, by speaking to me. But she said she simply couldn't help it. This has been going on ever since they moved down here, and she says she's nearly crazy by now. She said she was sure *he* was crazy at first. But he's been absolutely normal in every respect, otherwise."

"How did she first get on to it?"

"She said she noticed that he was mysteriously absenting himself every afternoon, and not coming home until dinner was cold. When it kept up, she began to think what I had first suspected—that there was another woman in the picture some place, fantastic as it seemed, knowing Carl, for he'd always been a model of fidelity. But, anyway, her suspicions grew so intolerable that she finally followed him. And that's when she learned that it wasn't a woman. It was a pelican."

"But what *about* the pelican, for heaven's sake!"

Nell shrugged. "I don't know. Since we know nothing about it all, she said she dare not say another word. She's afraid of what Carl might do if he learned she'd said so much to me, as it is. I simply couldn't get another word out of her. George, there's only one thing we can do."

I was inclined to agree with her. "After we wash up a bit, we'll drive down to the Pier alone, and see for ourselves. If what Maude has been telling you is true, he's probably headed for there now."

A HALF hour later, I drove onto the Pier slowly, keeping one weather eye open for Carl. There were a few people on the Pier, and some cars; but not many, for it was nearly the dinner hour. We had no difficulty sighting Carl, and I pulled into a diagonal parking space far enough away from him so that he couldn't see us but we had a clear view of him.

He was sitting on a bench facing the water, and Maude was right. There was a pelican on the sidewalk beside him.

I don't know whether you've ever seen a pelican—in person, as it were. Extremely graceful in flight, they're awkward creatures at best as they waddle absurdly about on land. Still, there's something definitely amusing and ingratiating about them. They're like long-nosed, supercilious Puritans, pompous and solemn, and yet with an underlying and paradoxical rakishness about them that lends them an indescribably raffish air that is somehow endearing.

It's a tourist diversion to buy frozen minnows at the stand on the Pier with which to feed the birds. They'll sit beside you patiently, staring vaguely off into the middle-distance, apparently lost in their own grave

thoughts, until you deign to toss a minnow their way, which brings an abrupt end to their spurious reverie.

This was the business that was engaging Carl at the moment. The bird's head was at his right elbow, and Carl seemed to be talking to the creature, in a low, intimate tone of voice.

I wondered what was so terrible about a man harmlessly feeding a pelican.

Well, Nell and I sat there, bewildered, watching. I admit I'm less observant than Nell. I kept looking at what I could see of Carl's profile, and I suspect I was watching for some signs of madness. So absorbed was I with this melancholy task that I was scarcely seeing the pelican itself.

Nell was as intent as I. Some time passed by—perhaps as much as twenty minutes—when I heard Nell draw in her breath sharply.

And it was then that she said, "Hindus! Hindus, George!"

"I looked at Nell. "Hindus?"

She was flushed and excited with some discovery, and only half-listening to me, her eyes on Carl and the pelican. "Yes, of course, dear. East Indians, you know."

It was the last straw. My hand slapped my thigh in exasperation. "I give up!" I said. "First Carl, now you. What in the world have Hindus to do with all this?"

"Oh, keep still," Nell said absently. "Listen, do what I say, and you'll understand what I mean. Don't watch Carl. Watch the pelican!"

She was so excited by whatever idea was obsessing her, that I questioned her no further but, half-hypnotized, did as she told me. It must have been all of ten minutes before I began to understand what Nell was talking about.

I focussed my gaze on the pelican with an intensity that nearly made me cross-eyed. It was a perfectly ordinary-looking bird, no different that I could see from any of the other waddling about the Pier. And yet—as I watched, I could feel myself holding my breath in disbelief of a growing recognition. It was too insane.

The absurd one-sided conversation was still going on between Carl and the pelican, and he was feeding it minnows at intervals. It was what happened in between that caught my attention. The pelican laid its head against Carl's arm and rubbed it lovingly. At times, it looked up into his face and nodded its head in solemn agreement with whatever it was that he was saying.

"Well, I'll be damned!" I said softly. "That pelican acts for all the world like—like—"

I caught myself up short, realizing how ridiculous what I'd been about to say would sound.

But Nell wasn't edging away from me in alarm. Her eyes were shining.

"You see it, too?" she said. "For all the world like Rose Morley! That's what I meant about Hindus, George. Aren't they the ones who believe in the transmigration of souls? I tell you, that *is* Rose Morley. Anyone who ever knew her couldn't doubt it. To Maude, the pelican is just a pelican, for she never knew Rose. But Carl must have known that we'd recognize her, since he'd been able to, and of course he didn't want us to find out."

"But why?" I asked.

"Oh, don't be so obtuse, dear! He knows he's hurting Maude badly enough as it is, but he's afraid it would hurt her infinitely more if she knew about Rose and learned that he'd found his love again. No wonder Maude has simply faded from his consciousness!"

In forty years, I've learned not to argue with Nell or her woman intuition. So I thought I was in perfect agreement with her own ideas when I said, "Do you think it would be better if we said nothing at all about our discovery to Maude?"

"I most certainly do not!" Nell glared at me. "I think it's perfectly shocking that he's letting Maude suffer the way she is. I'd rather know the truth myself, and I intend to tell her all about it."

"You're forgetting one thing. It isn't everybody who believes in the transmigration of souls. Suppose Maude decides you're insane?"

"She won't. I'm convinced of the truth of what we've discovered. And you are, too!" Nell said shrewdly. "That pelican is Rose Morley, and you know it as well as I do. We'll convince Maude some way."

I remember something else. "You're forgetting another thing," I said. "Our solemn promise to Carl never to tell Maude about Rose."

"Oh!" That gave Nell pause, for she has always been as meticulous about keeping promises as I have been.

With one last look at Carl and his sweetheart—in the sunset, they were absurdly like an affectionate, long-married couple seated before a dying fire—Nell and I went back to the motel in silence.

PERHAPS we would have told Maude then, anyway. We certainly would have debated, at least, the wisdom of forgetting our promise to Carl and telling her.

But as it happened we said nothing at all to Maude.

For when we returned to the motor court, there was a telegram awaiting us from our son-in-law, Bill. Our daughter, Harriet, had given birth to her fourth child prematurely, and it was feared neither she nor the baby would live.

We were terribly agitated by the news, of course, and in the ensuing excitement the troubles of the Grays were entirely forgotten by us. Nell reached Maude by telephone, and managed to give her the news about Harriet; and Maude promised to have Carl ship our car north, while we flew back by plane.

Harriet and the baby, fortunately, had already taken a turn for the better even before we landed in Chicago, and Bill's second reassuring telegram had just missed us in Florida by minutes. However, it was some weeks before Harriet and the new baby were entirely well, and we naturally stayed in the north to be with them.

Things were well again with us, but tragedy touched Carl and Maude that same spring. We never saw Carl again. He was drowned while on a fishing trip, when a sudden squall blew up, overturning his boat in the Gulf.

From a friend of ours who was in Florida at the time, we learned that Maude had been prostrated by the tragedy, that she had, indeed, tried to throw herself into the grave on top of Carl's coffin.

She sent us two long letters in which she wrote wildly and at length of her grief, and then there was nothing but silence. The silence worried us even more than her letters had. She not only didn't write us again of her own accord, she didn't even answer our alarmed letters and telegrams.

Nell fretted about it so incontinently that I took my vacation earlier than I'd intended and we drove down to St. Petersburg again. We didn't let Maude know we were coming, and before we even drove over to see her I headed the car, by a sort of tacit agreement, directly to the Municipal Pier.

I know the same suspicion was in Nell's mind as in my own. And we were perfectly correct.

There were two pelicans together now, near the bench where we'd first seen one with Carl. One I recognized immediately, for it was nodding its head with solemn agreement to something its mate was saying. And its mate—

"Just as I thought!" Nell said grimly. "It's Carl!"

The gestures and the resemblance were unmistakable. The two birds rubbed beaks, as we watched, with public and uninhibited love-making. The male cocked its head to one side at intervals, in Carl's old way, and regarded its mate attentively.

Strangely, I felt comforted in a way to know that Death was not the end, that life went on beyond the grave. And yet at the same time I was aware of a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach. It seemed to me shameful and unjust that Carl should have won his happiness at the price of another's inconsolable grief. And when I looked at Nell I knew the same thought was bothering her, too.

She said resentfully, "It's nice to know he's happy. But I can't forgive him, really. To think of Maude grieving her heart out, not a mile away. Come on, George. Let's go there. I'm determined to tell her the truth now. I feel that this releases us from our promise to Carl."

And I agreed with her entirely.

OUR hearts were heavy as we drove to the familiar address, for we didn't know what we should find. I suppose we expected to discover Maude in the last stages of a de-

cline. But we were in for the shock of our lives. Maude looked wonderful. She'd regained her lost weight and her old manner. The only thing about her that was different was the hint of embarrassment with which she greeted us.

Nell lost no time in getting down to cases. "Maude, dear, just before we came here, we stopped at the Municipal Pier—"

Maude looked immensely relieved. She said quietly, "You're trying to tell me that you saw Carl."

Her matter-of-factness bewildered us. For the first time in her life, I saw Nell completely nonplussed. I said, "As a matter of fact, we didn't see Carl exactly. That is—"

"You saw him in his new incarnation as a pelican," Maude said. "I can tell by your faces. I'm glad, for I shouldn't have known how to explain. I discovered him myself, quite by accident, when I wandered onto the Pier one day. And there he was, unmistakably. After twenty-five years of living with Carl I knew his every gesture, and I knew I couldn't be mistaken. Carl was a pelican, making shameless love to that other pelican with whom he was so long obsessed, whoever she is. The scene quite effectively ended my grief," Maude said firmly.

Well, we didn't explain. We let it go. Since Maude had recovered and was apparently incurious, there was no point now in bringing up the story of Rose Morley.

"But why didn't you answer our letters?" Nell asked. "We were so worried about you. Why didn't you tell us?"

"I was afraid you wouldn't believe me," Maude said. "Besides, after the way I'd carried on in my first grief, it was a little embarrassing, when you didn't know the whole story, for me to confess that I've married again." She rose, smiling happily. "Wilbur!"

A thin, ineffectual, elderly man wandered in from the kitchen.

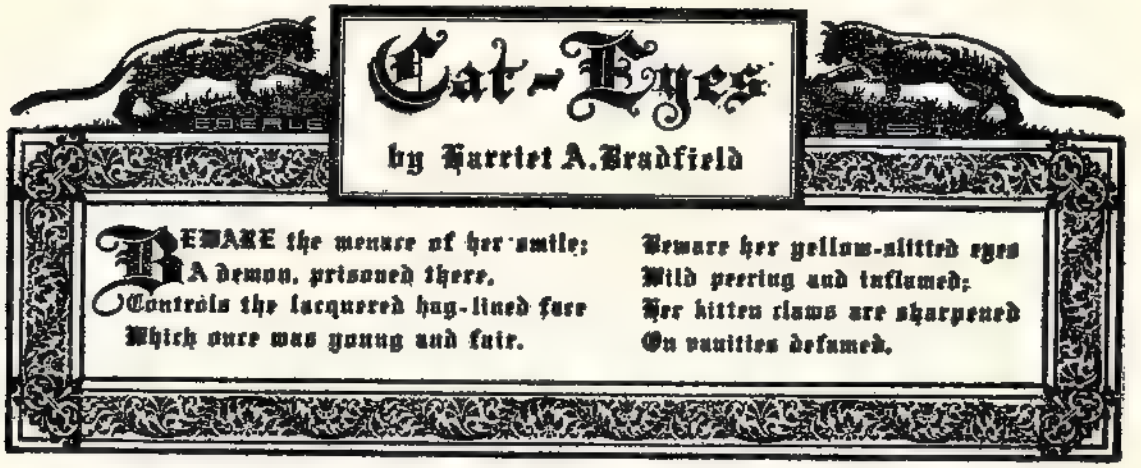
"These are my friends, Nell and George Philps, from Chicago," Maude introduced us. She patted Wilbur on the back gently, as if he were a child. "Now don't you think it would be nice, Wilbur, to run down to the drugstore to get us some ice cream? Don't let him give you chocolate, when you know I prefer strawberry. Take your umbrella, and wear your rubbers, for it looks like rain. Don't slam the door as you go out, dear, and look both ways before you cross the street."

Her voice died away as she followed him out to the hall, issuing sixty instructions to the minute as she went.

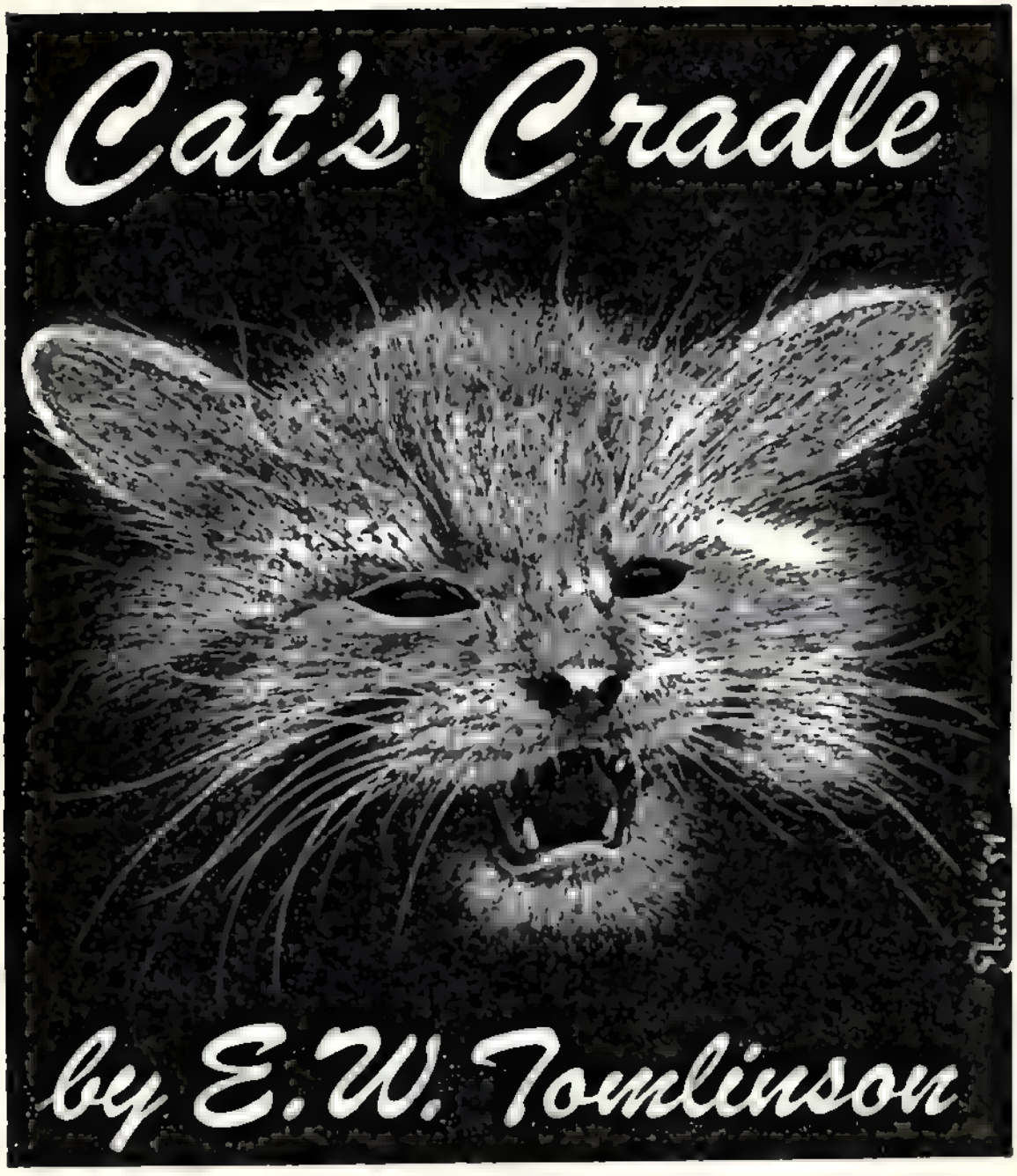
Nell looked at me in amazement a minute, then giggled softly. "Is everybody happy?"

I heard the happy intonations of Maude's voice as she bustled about the hall, her old officious self once more. I thought of the happy pelicans down on the Pier. My hand went out and covered Nell's.

"Everybody is," I said.



Cat's Cradle



by E. W. Tomlinson

. . . the glassy eyes of the stuffed crocodile seemed to gleam with mockery.

IT has been a long time since I have seen children playing at cat's-cradle. It was popular pastime when I was a boy and I can remember how children were set to playing the game as an engagement for long Sabbath afternoons when custom and parents required quiet and repose. On such occasions my sister and I faced each other from hassocks placed in the large parlor bow-window and for several hours were occupied with a

Heading by Joseph Eberle

long loop of cord and a printed chart which showed us how to begin and how to progress, alternately lifting a continuously more intricate complex of cord from each others hands.

I have often wondered how the game ever came to this country—what strange group of immigrants brought the cat's-cradle with them from over the sea. But more I wonder how it ever came to asume the rank of a game for children, whose neatest approach to evil was an occasional raid on cookie-jar or jam-pot. Even in the mild form it assumed there remained a taint of an old evil, especially since some of the figures were called by such names as "Hang the Witch", "Flying Goblin" and the like. I can now see more clearly this truth because of what happened to a friend of mine. I trust his veracity completely for reasons which need no explanation here. And I know that his powers of observation are remarkable.

My friend is a man only a little older than myself and we were brought up together. The houses of our parents were so placed that their alley-entrances were exactly opposite and the children of both establishments were constantly back and forth. My sister and I were as much at home in my friend's house as we were in our own and I am happy to remember that the reverse was also true. Our father was the minister of a local church while my friend's father was the director of a bank. So it was that my friend inherited a sizeable and well-invested fortune which has left him free to do as he liked. He has always used his money well, never squandering it as so many wealthy sons of wealthy parents have done. His tatstes were always serious and his money only enabled him to indulge his predilection for travel and education. Late in life he married and became himself a father, but the incident which I am about to relate occured to him when he was a young man. He had been pursuing his studies at the Sorbonne toward a graduate degree. It was near the turn of the century. Science was in the air and superstition had been (it was supposed) thrown upon time's scrap-heap of outmoded things—along with revealed religion, public morality and the divine right of kings. My friend was a child of those times, deeply infected with an aversion to immaterial things which cannot be examined under a microscope or contained in a test-tube.

The summer had been fine and my friend had long looked forward to a holiday in the Pyrenees after a protracted season of seminars. He had gone by train to Lourdes, examined the records and watched the pilgrims with a preconceived disbelief which no amount of visual proof could touch. Beyond Lourdes he had traveled by voiture up the lower slopes of the chain of rough mountains which separates France from Spain. He had spent some time in the tiny mountain state of Andorra, looking into its strange dualistic government. But when the life in Andorra began to pall he hired a donkey and set out to travel on foot into the Spanish country beyond.

THE road soon became little more than a track across barren stones and earth and my friend had begun to feel a little shut in by the towering peaks and looming sun-baked cliffs. Night was approaching and my friend had seen no sight of human habitation since early afternoon. He was beginning to wonder if he would not be forced to sleep cold upon the ground when he saw with distinct relief a well-constructed house facing him as he rounded a turn among the boulders. For a moment he wondered how anyone could scratch a living from the bare earth and rock about the house but quickly put aside a problem which concerned him less immediately than a warm supper and a comfortable bed.

The lower story of the house was of roughly dressed stone and the upper half-story was of planed timber surmounted by a tiled roof. A few thin chickens scratched dispiritedly in the dooryard and a sleek black cat sat warming itself in the dying rays of the sun. Astout girl was cooking something on an outdoor brazier behind the building, but it required more than one hail to bring her to the roadside. My friend had some difficulty in making her understand his wants, for he spoke the best of French and Spanish while the girl spoke only the bastard Pyrenean patois—so it was more by gesture than word of mouth that my friend finally con-

veyed the idea of his wishing a meal and a night's rest. It was the pesetas which he displayed which appeared to illumine his meaning best of all.

The dull-eyed girl surveyed my friend and his money, then turned and called raucously toward the house. The door was opened and another woman appeared, a stout woman who from resemblance appeared to be the girl's mother. But while the girl was roughly clothed, wearing a cloth about her head and rope sandals on her feet, the mother was well dressed in heavy black silk. Her graying hair was pulled tautly back with combs and she wore black patent-leather buttoned shoes, over the high tops of which bulged her fat ankles. Her fingers were so loaded with broad gold rings set with bright stones, and such a large gold brooch was set in the black silk at her throat that my friend thought suddenly of the border smugglers of whose activities he had lately heard. Somehow he wished he had not so definitely requested his night's lodging. Perhaps the stones of the roadside would have been preferable. However, the deed was done. After an unintelligible conversation with her daughter the old woman took my friend's money, dropped it into a capacious bosom and ushered him into the house.

My friend hardly recalls the supper which was served him because during the meal his attention was so riveted upon a large stuffed crocodile which hung from the ceiling of a recess in a wall. He does recall that the meal was plentiful and good and that the girl ate greedily, leaning over her plate, while the mother ate daintily as a duchess, pausing at intervals to survey her visitor and to direct unanswered remarks to the girl. The sun had set by now and a lamp had been lighted. Its rays were oddly reflected from the teeth and shiny glass eyes of the crocodile, as well as from the highly polished surfaces of a few tall old chairs and a heavily carved armoire which were the room's only furnishings. The ceiling overhead was composed of wooden beams, overlaid by the flooring of the upper attic story. The floor was of stones cut in such a way that a design of a six-pointed star enclosed in a hexagon stood out against regular horizontal lines.

So much my friend observed of the main room of the house. Then, the meal being finished, he was led down a short hall. At its end was a ladder leading upward through a hole in the ceiling to the attic. It was indicated that his room was above, and when he had climbed the ladder a lighted candle was passed up to him. By its light he saw that a low bed was situated at the end of the attic under a window and that at the other end were several very old chests, carved and bound with brass. He was very tired after his long day of walking and climbing and without delay pulled off his shoes and outer garments, blew out the candle and was soon asleep.

He relates that he could not have been asleep long when he was awakened by a high, thin sound which reminded him of the distant howling of a dog, but infinitely higher in pitch and more prolonged. Sitting up in bed he placed the sound as coming from the room below and suddenly the short hair on the back of his neck stood erect as a cold chill swept over him.

Quietly getting out of bed he peered down the trap-door of the garret but could see only a flickering light on the floor beneath it, a reddish light reflected from the parlor. His curiosity infinitely aroused and his inexplicable fear overcome he peered about him in the darkness, his eye finally encountering a red gleam among the chests at the far end of the attic. It came from a small knothole in the floor boards, upon which he lay down at full length in order to peer through into the parlor. He saw something which to this day his mind will not accept—and about which he has spoken to no one other than myself.

The view which his vantage-point disclosed was broad enough to include the parlor below nearly from wall to wall. Directly beneath him was the six-pointed star. He could see that at each point of the star had been set a low dish containing some material which was burning redly with a great deal of pungent smoke. The two women were seated cross-legged upon the floor within the star and between them lay a square of carpeting. Upon this carpeting rested the black cat which my friend had observed in the dooryard. It crouched, and

its tail twitched as if it were thinking of pleasant things. Over its back and in the air between the women stretched a long loop of cord upon which were strung many bright beads. The women appeared to be playing cat's cradle and my friend was intensely puzzled as to what might be their purpose in playing such a game at such an hour under such strange circumstances.

THE high, thin noise he had heard appeared to come from the women, but by now it had been completely sustained, without break or pause. The red light had become more intense and the room below was becoming partially obscured by smoke. The loop of cord whipped and flashed, evolving patterns more and more complex, the affixed beads seeming to slip into strange planes and angles, from one design into another like the bright patterns in a kaleidoscope. Its effects were hypnotic and my friend now believes that he slipped into a semi-comatose state as he watched the changing shapes through the obscuring smoke in which all outlines were growing dimmed, so that the whole scene below him took on the aspect of a scene under water—objects moving into focus and sliping out of focus in a celeritous rhythm of strange value.

The square of carpeting appeared to roll and twist upon itself in a slow and doubtful fashion while the cat appeared to have rolled on its back with its legs stretched as if being pulled asunder. The loop of cord moved at dizzying speed, the women's hands dipping and twisting like evening birds as they passed the cord back and forth to each other. The old woman's tightly confined hair fell from its combs and over her shoulders in a great cascade and she bent backward and forward to the rising and falling of the thin wail which now seemed to come out of the very walls. The girl appeared to grow larger, to impose herself on the scene as it were, and her hands moved with lightning rapidity in opposition to those of the older woman.

Suddenly the noise ceased. The intense activity stopped. The red light flared once more and quickly died away, the smoke seeming to dissipate itself. And my friend saw—but what he saw was impossible for him to accept and oppose. So his senses left him; but not before he saw the girl pick up the cat—if cat it still was—and, opening the bosom of her dress, appear to nurse it as a woman would nurse an infant. The old woman slumped forward like a half-empty meal sack.

This much my friend saw before he fainted. When he came to himself it was dawn and the pale light in the garret enabled him to see well enough to get into his clothing. He slipped down the ladder and crossed the empty parlor. As he opened the door the glassy eyes of the crocodile seemed to gleam with mockery. But the sharp, cool air of the mountain morning heartened him as he untied his burro and hastened away from the house and up the valley.

A FEW hours later he made his breakfast at a small settlement which clung to a hillside like barnacles to a ship's hull. At the inn a few guarded queries elicited responses which showed that the villagers detested the old house down the valley—because, Señor, those women are witches. Oh surley, Señor, we go there sometimes to obtain a love-potion or a medicine against the murrain, but no, Señor, we hold no frequent business at that house. It is better, Señor, not to tempt the Devil!

This then is the story told me by my friend when we were both young men and he just returned from Europe. He did not know what to think of his experience, since it fell into no category with which he was familiar—for his mind does not allow for the possibility of witchcraft. But I, being somewhat better versed in these matters, believe that what he saw was nothing less than a sacrament of sorcery, a feeding of the familiar.

Of course, I do not *know,* but that is what I believe. At any rate, my friend says that the simulacrum which the girl lifted from the square of carpeting was alive, for he saw it move. He says guardedly, however, that the object was obviously neither animal nor human.

THE IRON HANDS OF KATZAVEERE

by David Lewis Eynon

"*Apres moi, le deluge*," said Hauptmann von Frolich pleasantly, puffing to start his Havana, "if you will permit me to quote a Frenchman—Louis XVI, *nicht wahr?*"

"Pardon, Mynheer Commandant?" said Burgomeister ten Brink, pulling his attention from the sound of the firing up the coast—guns that promised liberation to his village of fisherfolk. "You were saying?"

"In the morning," explained the German wearily, tired after three years of dealing with gross Dutch metality, "when we leave your gemütlich little village—where, need I says, we have enjoyed our . . . 'Holiday'—the dike would be blown. I shall command the demolition squad personally."

Ten Brink stared at the German captain. The afternoon sun had faded now, the firelight licked at the German's crooked smile, brightened the decorations on his tunic.

"You would do *that?*" ten Brink asked hollowly. "Destroy the work of centuries, leave my people destitute and—"

"Oh, please," said von Frolich hastily, "it's nothing personal, you understand, my dear Herr Burgomeister." He settled his weight more comfortably in the large chair. "Purely a question of military expediency. I've grown quite fond of Katzaveere, actually. Perhaps, after the war, when my vacation permits . . ." The captain blew a ring of smoke towards the fireplace and mused.

"However," he drew himself back to the business at hand, "when the English arrive," he cocked his head and listened to the mumble of artillery for a second, "about noon tomorrow, I should imagine—you can express my regrets that I could not be here to receive them." He winked at ten Brink. "And also extend my apologies for the town's being under water," he added, showing a denture made by the best orthodontist in Hamburg.

"But my villagers," said ten Brink helplessly. "It means the end of everything for them!" he protested.

"Nothing actually ever begins or ends—does it really?" asked von Frolich. He had studied philosophy at Marburg. "And you can repair things, one day. Your town should be as good as new—in ten or twenty years!" he laughed, shaking until his chair groaned.

Ten Brink's mind flooded with desperation. He fought the urge to throttle the German as von Frolich sat laughing. That guaranteed immediate reprisal—a hundred fishermen shot, perhaps the whole village executed. His own death ten Brink could discount, but his people must survive somehow. If they lived, only, there always remained the hope of rebuilding.

Von Frolich's laughter ebbed into an amiable smile. He propped his boots on the grate, warming his toes against the evening dampness that seeped slowly into the stones of the Raadhuis floor.

"Oh, yes, Herr Burgomeister," said the Hauptmann familiarly, "before I take my leave, there is a point about which I have often meant to ask." He jutted his cigar towards the mantel. "Those hands," he said, indicating thre black casts hanging by their wrists from hooks set in the stone, "iron, are they not? What brings them there?"

"Hands?" asked Ten Brink, wondering how the German, on the brink of disaster, could interest himself with trifles. "They are from the middle ages. It was then the custom to cut off a hand—as a punishment for great crimes. The hand was set in iron and hung in a public place as a warning to malefactors."

"Ach, so!" exclaimed von Frolich, bending forward with interest. He reached up and clasped the nearest hand, letting it clank back against the stone when he felt the coldness of the iron.

"And these hands," he asked, rubbing his fingers together, "to whom did they belong?"

"The two right hands belonged to a pair of traitors," said the Burgomeister pointedly. "They attempted to deliver our town to the Spanish, it was believed."

"Believed?" asked von Frolich. "There was no proof, then?"

"Perhaps in those days, barbarity was not so distinctly cut," said ten Brink acidly. "The third hand was a common murderer's."

"Wonderful!" said von Frolich, blandly ignoring ten Brink's barb. "Such a charming tale! Really, the things one encounters in out of the way spots!" He drew out a fresh cigar, struck a match on the nearest hand and lighted his smoke with deep drags.

As the Hauptmann savored his cigar the Burgomeister desperately made plans for the evacuation of his people. The two men sat in

Heading by Joseph Eberle

silence for several minutes, then the German spoke.

"You know, my dear ten Brink," he said jovially, "I have it! Those hands will make fine souvenirs—*wen wir nehmen Ubshied.* Just the memento I need of my pleasant sojourn in Katzaveere. May I?" he asked, cocking an eyebrow towards the mantel.

"Take them," said ten Brink softly.

"A thousand thanks," said von Frolich, tossing the burned match into the fireplace. "I'll wager, Herr Burgomeister," he said, winking slyly, "that you'd like to put my hands up there—as replacements—Nein?"

"If the Hauptmann will excuse me," said ten Brink bitterly, "I must see to the evacuation of my village."

"But of course, friend Burgomeister," said von Frolich politiely, bowing from his chair. "Till morning, then?"

Ten Brink nodded sharply and started toward the door.

"Oh, and also, Herr Burgomeister," called the Hauptmann as ten Brink reached the door, "thanks for the hands!"

THE door slammed and von Frolich leaned over to poke up the coals in the grate. When they glowed to his satisfaction he loosened his belt, opened his collar and reached for a glass of brandy at his elbow. From the North the rising winds brought the sound of artillery stronger than before. Von Frolich listened to the barrage—mixed, he judged, listening to the muted whine of the lighter guns against the dull rumble of the 250's.

An orderly slipped into the room and closed the shutters against the night, leaving an oil lamp beside the captain, who sat staring at pictures in the fire. Von Frolich rolled the brandy slowly around his tongue and stared up curiously at the hands, etched against the old stone by the firelight. As he studied them in the flickering of the flames they seemed to pulse and clench with the slow, strong rhythm of the rising fire.

The North Sea wind moaned over the chimney, sucking the flames higher, and the hands seemed to dance from their hooks like tiny puppets, anxious for the show to begin. Von Frolich started as the iron fingers drummed on the stone—but no, it was only a flash of hail against the window panes outside.

The German broke his gaze from the mantel, gulped the rest of his brandy and stared determinedly into the fire.

"ODD," said Colonel Willoughby, lowering his binoculars. "They've *been* destroying the dikes all down the coast—you don't suppose they're planning to make a stand here, do you?' he asked a junior officer at his left.

"It's not very likely, is it, Sir?" said Lieutenant Downs. "Our patrols haven't drawn any fire—unless, of course, Jerry's planning some sort of trap."

The Colonel pulled a battered package of Players from his tunic pocket, offered one to Downs and tamped his own against a thumbnail. He continued tapping the cigarette absently, staring out across the dunes capped with tufts of grass swaying gently against a leaden sky. The cry of a gull drifted across the murmur of the waves and the Colonel turned unconsciously to accept a light from the lieutenant.

"Jerry isn't given to subtleties, as a rule," mused the Colonel, who was trying to reconcile his military logic with the fact that the situation didn't "feel" right. "Still, I expect you'd better go in for a look around."

"Of course, Sir," said the youngster.

"Take along anyone you like, Downs," the Colonel said as the boy started up over the embankment. "I'd suggest Sergeant Phillips."

"Quite, Sir,' agreed Downs, motioning to an aging non-com in a scarred tin hat.

"Oh, and Downs," the Colonel added, glancing at his watch," we'll follow you in at twelve-thirty—regardless."

"Just as you say, Sir," said the lieutenant, reaching the Sergeant a hand to the top of the dune.

The Colonel watched silently as the two figures moved off among the waving grass —Downs in the lead, Phillips moving warily on his flank with a submachine gun gripped at the ready. They disappeared down a slope, popped up briefly as first Downs, then the Sergeant, writhed over the top of the next dune, then were beyond the Colonel's view. He lowered his glasses,

glanced again at his watch, then picked up the field telephone and asked for the artillery section.

The two Englishmen picked their way cautiously down a back street of Katzaveere, slipping quickly from doorway to doorway in the sinister silence of noon. Their hobnailed boots made brisk, urgent scrapes as they flicked across the cobbles beneath the gaunt windows of the narrow, leaning houses.

Downs twisted testily around a corner, into the street of the Ropemakers, and when he reached the next intersection motioned for Phillips to follow. The two men huddled together behind a coil of hawser, scanning the closed shutters along the street front. Directly ahead, looking down the street of the Never Ending Prayer, they could see the sparkle of the fountain in the main square. The sound of trickling water wandered merrily down the alley, chuckling to itself like an idiot in a graveyard.

As Downs turned to the Sergeant the clock in the Raadhuis tower started sonorously striking noon on a bell with the tone of a soul in chains.

"What do you make of it, Phillips?" whispered the boy.

"It's bloody quiet," said Phillips bitterly. "Probably a ruddy sniper behind every stinkin' window, Sir."

"I wonder," said Downs, doing his best to achieve the Colonel's tone. "Suppose we marched right up to their city hall and banged on the door—demanded that they surrender? They're caught, you know. They might be prepared to act reasonably."

"Well, Sir," said Phillips resignedly, "if they're still here, we're not goin' to get out anyway."

"Exactly," said Downs. "We could, of course, stay under cover until the Regiment moves in. However . . ."

"Look Lieutenant," said the Sergeant earnestly, "with all due allowances for our talents for sneakin' down back alleys, why we ain't hardly under cover, as I sees it. We didn't hardly come through the whole bloody town without anyone's noticin', Sir, and when the trouble starts . . ."

"Quite," said Downs. "Well, then," he sighed, straightening up from behind the coiled rope, "there's nothing else for it. Do try your best to look casual, Phillips. It makes all the difference, you know."

"Yes, Sir," said the Sergeant, who had a boy about Downs' age. "Casual, Sir."

THEIR boots rang loudly on the stones as they marched stiffly across the square, echoing back from the neat houses in the vacuum of silence. Together they passed the flashing fountain, tromped up the wide steps of the Raadhuis and pushed open the protesting iron studded door. For several seconds they waited in the entrance hall, tensed for a challenge, until their eyes adjusted to the shadows.

A door on their right stood open and they stepped simultaneously inside. Across the room, silhouetted against the dying embers of the fire, a German Captain in dress uniform sat facing them with a cracked smile on his bulging face.

A thin strip of light slanting through the shutters fell on the German's tunic, gilding his Iron Cross against his gray uniform. His booted feet lolled from the edge of the grate and relaxed in the ashes beneath. The Captain sat motionless, undisturbed by the sharp click as Phillips snapped off the safety catch of his weapon. The Sergeant leveled his automatic, but Downs stopped him.

"It's all right, Phillips," he said, stepping through the shadows to the German's elbow. "The Captain is quite dead."

The Sergeant moved rapidly to the door, swung it to and shot home the heavy bolt. He loosened his chin strap, tilted back his helmet and sidled to the window to peer through the slit in the shutters.

"Any activity, Phillips?" called the lieutenant from before the fireplace, where he stood staring curiously at Hauptmann von Frolich in the dim light. The Sergeant shook his head and tiptoted over beside Downs. Both men followed the Hauptmann's stare to the mantel, where a single hand hung beside two empty hooks.

Hauptmann von Frolich's body rolled slowly forward, expelling a thin stream of dead air from his cold lungs. He made a soft whistling noise as he bowed.

"Crikey!" gasped the Sergeant, swinging his gun butt around against von Frolich's

head. It landed with a thud and knocked the Hauptmann's body to the flagstones. Phillips shot the safety on his gun and stood tensely over the German's sprawling legs.

"Just a last gasp, Phillips," explained Lieutenant Downs, reholstering his service revolver. "I expect we've had the final word from him—poor devil."

"How long has he been dead, Sir?" asked the Sergeant warily.

"Sometime last night, I should judge," said Downs, peering down at von Frolich's rigid smile. "About midnight, say."

"An extremely good guess, Lieutenant," said a voice with a thick accent. The two soldiers looked up sharply, faced a smiling, hoary headed figure in the doorway. Lieutenant Downs glanced at the silver chain of office across the old man's shoulders, then extended his hand cordially.

"Are you in authority here, Sir?" he inquired.

"It is you who are in authority, I think," smiled the old man. "However, I am the Burgomeister, yes. Are you here—" he groped for the proper English expression "—in force, Lieutenant?"

"The Regiment will be moving in soon," said Downs. "Unless they meet resistance?"

"Neen," said ten Brink. He beckoned to a priest who had appeared in the hallway.

"Fortunate," said the boy. "Oh, I'm Lieutenant Downs, Sir. And this is Sergeant Phillips. Leeds Rifles."

"I am Jonkheer ten Brink—and this is Father Vermue," said the old man. "Hauptmann von Frolich—whose acquaintance you seem to have made already—asked me to extend his apologies that he could not be here to receive you properly."

"He did his receivin' proper enough to suit me," said Phillips, running his sleeve across his forehead.

"Yes, your town has been rather full of surprises," said Downs. "We had quite expected the dike to be blown. It's been happening all down the coast, you know, Sir."

"So we imagined," nodded ten Brink.

"We have just come from the sea wall," said Father Vermue. "It is intact, *Gott sei dank*!"

"Did you manage to deactivate their explosive, or something?" asked Downs.

"Oh, no," smiled the Burgomeister. "We had quite another job at the sea wall. We were burying a pair of hands."

"From the fireplace," said Phillips.

"Yes, from the fireplace," nodded ten Brink, walking over to the empty hooks set in the stone mantel. "Father Vermue gave them his blessing and I—as the secular arm—hurled them into the sea."

"God willing," said the Priest, missing ten Brink's sally in his zeal, "perhaps they will find peace there, finally."

"I'm afraid I don't understand, Sir," said Downs. "About the dike's not being blown, I mean. Surely the Germans didn't plan to leave the town intact?"

"Not at all," said ten Brink grimly. "The Hauptmann, here was to give the order himself. At the last minute, when his troops had withdrawn, he was fortunately interrupted."

"Your underground, I imagine," said Downs, offering cigarettes.

"In a sense," smiled ten Brink. "Actually, two traitors who wished to redeem themselves." The old man walked to the window and slowly pushed out the shutters. A coffin shaped rectangle of light fell across von Frolich's body, making the Iron Cross sparkle as it hung askew on his chest. The Hauptmann was smiling, still, up into the darkened beams of the high ceilinged Raadhuis, as if he saw a familiar face among the shadows.

The click of hobnailed boots came through the window as advance parties of the Leeds Rifles moved cautiously into the streets of Katzaveere. The Burgomeister listened to the first shouts of recognition as his returning fisherfolk met the advancing British. He smiled wistfully, then turned back to the hearth where the Priest and the two soldiers stood silently over Hauptmann von Frolich.

"You will notice, Lieutenant," said ten Brink casually, "that the Herr Hauptmann has been strangled."

"Strangled indeed!" marveled Lieutenant Downs. "Why, the fingers must have snapped his spine!"

"Ya," said the Burgomeister. "The fingers of *two right hands*."

Clark Ashton Smith

Not Altogether Sleep

BLITHE love, what dubious ponderings bemuse
Thy lover's mind! . . . In me thy memories are
As attar in some alabaster jar . . .
Wholly must I the rose-drawn essence lose
Upon unbalmed oblivion, and diffuse
Its odor on the dust? And shall no star
Of ours illume that ebon calendar
I keep beneath the taproots of the yews?

Or shall, in some ineffable permanence,
The senses merge into one only sense
Holding thine image evermore apart
From suns expired and cycles yet to come?—
Where time shall have none other pendulum
Than the remembered pulsings of thy heart?

Sonnet for the Psychoanalysts

WHEN sleep dissolved that super-Freudian dream
where featherless harpies mated while they fed,
I could not find my body: but a thread
of blood on fabled stairs, through mist and steam,
led to a hall of legend. There, in the gleam
of classic lamps, my table-seated head
in gem-bright goblets lazuline and red
saw essences Falernian fall and cream,
self-poured, with cans of seething beer. Beyond,
in balconies that craned on vacant skies,
one booted leg went striding sentry-wise.
It was my own. It guarded with strict care
my heart, a sanguine, ice-girt diamond
imprisoned in some crystal frigidaire.

Heading by
Vincent Napoli

Ooze

BY ANTHONY M. RUD

. . . for good and sufficient reasons was becoming known as "Dead House."

IN THE heart of a second-growth piney-woods jungle of southern Alabama, a region sparsely settled save by backwoods blacks and Cajans—that queer, half-wild people descended from Acadian exiles of the middle eighteenth century—stands a strange, enormous ruin.

Interminable trailers of Cherokee rose, white-laden during a single month of spring, have climbed the heights of its three remaining walls. Palmetto fans rise knee high above the base. A dozen scattered live oaks, now belying their nomenclature because of choking tufts of gray, Spanish moss and two-foot circlets of mistletoe parasite which have stripped bare of foliage the gnarled, knotted limbs, lean fantastic beards against the crumbling brick.

Immediately beyond, where the ground becomes soggier and lower—dropping away hopelessly into the tangle of dogwood, holly, poison sumac and pitcher plants that is Moccasin Swamp—undergrowth of ti-ti and annis has formed a protecting wall impenetrable to all save the furtive ones. Some few outcasts utilize the stinking depths of that sinister swamp, distilling "shinny" or "pure cawn" liquor for illicit trade.

Tradition states that this is the case,

at least—a tradition which antedates that of the premature ruin by many decades. I believe it, for during evenings intervening between investigations of the awesome spot I often was approached as a possible customer by wood-billies who could not fathom how anyone dared venture near without plenteous fortification of liquid courage.

I knew "shinny," therefore I did not purchase it for personal consumption. A dozen times I bought a quart or two, merely to establish credit among the Cajans, pouring away the vile stuff immediately into the sodden ground. It seemed then that only through filtration and condensation of their dozens of weird tales regarding "Daid House" could I arrive at understanding of the mystery and weight of horror hanging about the place.

Certain it is that out of all the superstitious cautioning, head-wagging and whispered nonsensities I obtained only two indisputable facts. The first was that no money, and no supporting battery of ten-gauge shotguns loaded with chilled shot, could induce either Cajan or darky of the region to approach within five hundred yards of that flowering wall! The second fact I shall dwell upon later.

Perhaps it would be as well, as I am only a mouthpiece in this chronicle, to relate in brief why I came to Alabama on this mission.

I am a scribbler of general fact articles, no fiction writer as was Lee Cranmer—though doubtless the confession is superfluous. Lee was my roommate during college days. I knew his family well, admiring John Corliss Cranmer even more than I admired the son and friend—and almost as much as Peggy Breede whom Lee married. Peggy liked me, but that was all. I cherish sanctified memory of her for just that much, as no other woman before or since has granted this gangling dyspeptic even a hint of joyous and sorrowful intimacy.

Work kept me to the city. Lee, on the other hand, coming of wealthy family—and, from the first, earning from his short-stories and novel royalties more than I wrested from editorial coffers—needed no anchorage. He and Peggy honeymooned a four-month trip to Alaska, visited Honolulu next winter, fished for salmon on Cain's River, New Brunswick, and generally enjoyed the outdoors at all seasons.

They kept an apartment in Wilmette, near Chicago, yet, during the few spring and fall seasons they were "home," both preferred to rent a suite at one of the country clubs to which Lee belonged. I suppose they spent thrice or five times the amount Lee actually earned, yet for my part I only honored that the two should find such great happiness in life and still accomplish artistic triumph.

They were honest, zestful young Americans, the type—and pretty nearly the *only* type—two million dollars cannot spoil. John Corliss Cranmer, father of Lee, though as different from his boy as a microscope is different from a painting by Remington, was even further from being dollar conscious. He lived in a world bounded only by the widening horizon of biological science—and his love for the two who would carry on that Cranmer name.

Many a time I used to wonder how it could be that as gentle, clean-souled and lovable a gentleman as John Corliss Cranmer could have ventured so far into scientific research without attaining small-caliber atheism. Few do. He believed both in God and human kind. To accuse him of murdering his boy and the girl wife who had come to be loved as the mother of baby Elsie—as well as blood and flesh of his own family—was a gruesome, terrible absurdity! Yes, even when John Corliss Cranmer was declared unmistakably insane!

Lacking a relative in the world, baby Elsie was given to me—and the middle-aged couple who had accompanied the three as servants about half of the known world. Elsie would be Peggy over again. I worshiped her, knowing that if my stewardship of her interests could make of her a woman of Peggy's loveliness and worth I should not have lived in vain. And at four Elsie stretched out her arms to me after a vain attempt to jerk out the bobbed tail of Lord Dick, my tolerant old Airedale—and called me "papa."

I felt a deep-down choking . . . yes, those strangely long black lashes some day might droop in fun or coquetry, but now

baby Elsie held a wistful, trusting seriousness in depths of ultramarine eyes—that same seriousness which only Lee had brought to Peggy.

Responsibility in one instant became double. That she might come to love me as more than foster parent was my dearest wish. Still, through selfishness I could not rob her of rightful heritage; she must know in after years. And the tale that I would tell her must not be the horrible suspicion which had been bandied about in common talk!

I went to Alabama, leaving Elsie in the competent hands of Mrs. Daniels and her husband, who had helped care for her since birth.

In my possession, prior to the trip, were the scant facts known to authorities at the time of John Corliss Cranmer's escape and disappearance. They were incredible enough.

For conducting biological research upon forms of protozon life, John Corliss Cranmer had hit upon this region of Alabama. Near a great swamp teeming with microscopic organisms, and situated in a semi-tropical belt where freezing weather rarely intruded to harden the bogs, the spot seemed ideal for his purpose.

Through Mobile he could secure supplies daily by truck. The isolation suited. With only an octoroon man to act as chef, houseman and valet for the times he entertained no visitors, he brought down scientific apparatus, occupying temporary quarters in the village of Burdett's Corners while his woods house was in process of construction.

By all accounts the Lodge, as he termed it, was a substantial affair of eight or nine rooms, built of logs and planed lumber bought at Oak Grove. Lee and Peggy were expected to spend a portion of each year with him; quail, wild turkey and deer abounded, which fact made such a vacation certain to please the pair. At other times all save four rooms was closed.

This was in 1907, the year of Lee's marriage. Six years later when I came down, no sign of a house remained except certain mangled and rotting timbers projecting from viscid soil—or what seemed like soil. And a twelve-foot wall of brick had been built to enclose the house completely! One portion of this had fallen *inward!*

II

I WASTED weeks of time at first, interviewing officials of the police department at Mobile, the town marshals and county sheriffs of Washington and Mobile counties, and officials of the psychopathic hospital from which Cranmer made his escape.

In substance the story was one of baseless homicidal mania. Cranmer the elder had been away until late fall, attending two scientific conferences in the North, and then going abroad to compare certain of his findings with those of a Dr. Gemmler of Prague University. Unfortunately, Gemmler was assassinated by a religious fanatic shortly afterward. The fanatic voiced virulent objection to all Mendelian research as blasphemous. This was his only defense. He was hanged.

Search of Gemmler's notes and effects revealed nothing save an immense amount of laboratory data on *karyokinesis*—the process of chromosome arrangement occurring in first growing cells of higher animal embryos. Apparently Cranmer had hoped to develop some similarities, or point out differences between hereditary factors occurring in lower forms of life and those half-demonstrated in the cat and monkey. The authorities had found nothing that helped me. Cranmer had gone crazy; was that not sufficient explanation?

Perhaps it was for them, but not for me —and Elsie.

But to the slim basis of fact I was able to unearth:

No one wondered when a fortnight passed without appearance of any person from the Lodge. Why should anyone worry? A provision salesman in Mobile called up twice, but failed to complete a connection. He merely shrugged. The Cranmers had gone away somewhere on a trip. In a week, a month, a year they would be back. Meanwhile he lost commissions, but what of it? He had no responsibility for these queer nuts up there in the piney-woods. Crazy?

Of course! Why should any guy with millions to spend shut himself up among the Cajans and draw microscope-enlarged notebook pictures of—what the salesman called —"germs"?

A stir was aroused at the end of the fortnight, but the commotion confined itself to building circles. Twenty carloads of building brick, fifty bricklayers, and a quarter-acre of fine-meshed wire—the sort used for screening off pens of rodents and small marsupials in a zoological garden—were ordered, *damn expense, hurry!* by an unshaved, tattered man who identified himself with difficulty as John Corliss Cranmer.

He looked strange, even then. A certified check for the total amount, given in advance, and another check of absurd size slung toward a labor *entrepreneur,* silenced objection, however. These millionaires were apt to be flighty. When they wanted something they wanted it at tap of the bell. Well, why not drag down the big profits? A poorer man would have been jacked up in a day. Cranmer's fluid gold bathed him in immunity to criticism.

The encircling wall was built, and roofed with wire netting which drooped about the squat-pitch of the Lodge. Curious inquiries of workmen went unanswered until the final day.

Then Cranmer, a strange, intense apparition who showed himself more shabby than a quay derelict, assembled every man jack of the workmen. In one hand he grasped a wad of blue slips—fifty-six of them. In the other he held a Luger automatic.

"I offer each man a thousand dollars for *silence!*" he announced. "As an alternative —*death!* You know little. Will all of you consent to swear upon your honor that nothing which has occurred here will be mentioned elsewhere? By this I mean *absolute* silence! You will not come back here to investigate anything. You will not tell your wives. You will not open your mouths even upon the witness stand in case you are called! My price is one thousand apiece.

"In case one of you betrays me *I give you my word that this man shall die!* I am rich. I can hire men to do murder. Well, what do you say?"

The men glanced apprehensively about. The threatening Luger decided them. To a man they accepted the blue slips—and, save for one witness who lost all sense of fear and morality in drink, none of the fifty-six has broken his pledge, as far as I know. That one bricklayer died later in delirium tremens.

It might have been different had not John Corliss Cranmer escaped.

III

THEY found him the first time, mouthing meaningless phrases concerning an amoeba—one of the tiny forms of protoplasmic life he was known to have studied. Also he leaped into a hysteria of self-accusation. He had murdered two innocent people! The tragedy was his crime. He had drowned them in ooze! Ah, God!

Unfortunately for all concerned, Cranmer, dazed and indubitably stark insane, chose to perform a strange travesty on fishing four miles to the west of his lodge—on the further border of Moccasin Swamp. His clothing had been torn to shreds, his hat was gone, and he was coated from head to foot with gluey mire. It was far from strange that the good folk of Shanksville, who never had glimpsed the eccentric millionaire, failed to associate him with Cranmer.

They took him in, searched his pockets —finding no sign save an inordinate sum of money—and then put him under medical care. Two precious weeks elapsed before Dr. Quirk reluctantly acknowledged that he could do nothing more for this patient, and notified the proper authorities.

Then much more time was wasted. Hot April and half of still hotter May passed by before the loose ends were connected. Then it did little good to know that this raving unfortunate was Cranmer, or that the two persons of whom he shouted in disconnected delirium actually had disappeared. Alienists absolved him of responsibility. He was confined in a cell reserved for the violent.

Meanwhile, strange things occurred back at the Lodge—which now, for good and sufficient reason, was becoming known to dwellers of the woods as Dead House. Un-

til one of the walls fell in, however, there had been no chance to see—unless one possessed the temerity to climb either one of the tall live oaks, or mount the barrier itself. No doors or opening of any sort had been placed in that hastily-constructed wall!

By the time the western side of the wall fell, not a native for miles around but feared the spot far more than even the bottomless, snake-infested bogs which lay to west and north.

The single statement was all John Corliss Cranmer ever gave to the world. It proved sufficient. An immediate search was instituted. It showed that less than three weeks before the day of initial reckoning, his son and Peggy had come to visit him for the second time that winter—leaving Elsie behind in company of the Daniels pair. They had rented a pair of Gordons for quail hunting, and had gone out. That was the last anyone had seen of them.

The backwoods Negro who glimpsed them stalking a covey behind their two pointing dogs had known no more—even when sweated through twelve hours of third degree. Certain suspicious circumstances (having to do only with his regular pursuit of "shinny" transportation) had caused him to fall under suspicion at first. He was dropped.

Two days later the scientist himself was apprehended—a gibbering idiot who sloughed his pole—holding on to the baited hook—into a marsh where nothing save moccasins, an errant alligator, or amphibian life could have been snared.

His mind was three-quarters dead. Cranmer then was in the state of the dope fiend who rouses to a sitting position to ask seriously how many Bolshevists were killed by Julius Caesar before he was stabbed by Brutus, or why it was that Roller canaries sang only on Wednesday evenings. He knew that tragedy of the most sinister sort had stalked through his life—but little more, at first.

Later the police obtained that one statement that he had murdered two human beings, but never could means or motive be established. Official guess as to the means was no more than wild conjecture; it mentioned enticing the victims to the noisome depths of Moccasin Swamp, there to let them flounder and sink.

The two were his son and daughter-in-law, Lee and Peggy!

IV

BY FEIGNING coma—then awakening with suddenness to assault three attendants with incredible ferocity and strength—John Corliss Cranmer escaped from Elizabeth Ritter Hospital.

How he hid, how he managed to traverse sixty-odd intervening miles and still balk detection, remains a minor mystery to be explained only by the assumption that maniacal cunning sufficed to outwit saner intellects.

Traverse these miles he did, though until I was fortunate enough to uncover evidence to this effect, it was supposed generally that he had made his escape as stowaway on one of the banana boats, or had buried himself in some portion of the nearer woods where he was unknown. The truth ought to be welcome to householders of Shanksville, Burdett's Corners and vicinage—those excusably prudent ones who to this day keep loaded shotguns handy and barricade their doors at nightfall.

The first ten days of my investigation may be touched upon in brief. I made headquarters in Burdett's Corners, and drove out each morning, carrying lunch and returning for my grits and pineywoods pork or mutton before nightfall. My first plan had been to camp out at the edge of the swamp, for opportunity to enjoy the outdoors comes rarely in my direction. Yet after one cursory examination of the premises I abandoned the idea. I did not *want* to camp alone there. And I am less superstitious than a real estate agent.

It was, perhaps, psychic warning; more probably the queer, faint, salty odor as of fish left to decay, which hung about the ruin, made too unpleasant an impression upon my olfactory sense. I experienced a distinct chill every time the lengthening shadows caught me near Dead House.

The smell impressed me. In newspaper reports of the case one ingenious explanation had been worked out. To the rear of

the spot where Dead House had stood—inside the wall—was a swampy hollow circular in shape. Only a little real mud lay in the bottom of the bowlike depression now, but one reporter on the staff of *The Mobile Register* guessed that during the tenancy of the lodge it had been a fishpool. Drying up of the water had killed the fish, who now permeated the remnant of mud with this foul odor.

The possibility that Cranmer had needed to keep fresh fish at hand for some of his experiments silenced the natural objection that in a country where every stream holds gar pike, bass, catfish and many other edible varieties, no one would dream of stocking a stagnant puddle.

After tramping about the enclosure, testing the queerly brittle, desiccated top stratum of earth within and speculating concerning the possible purpose of the wall, I cut off a long limb of chinaberry and probed the mud. One fragment of fish spine would confirm the guess of that imaginative reporter.

I found nothing resembling a piscal skeleton, but established several facts. First, this mud crater had definite bottom only three or four feet below the surface of remaining ooze. Second, the fishy stench became stronger as I stirred. Third, at one time the mud, water, or whatever had comprised the balance of content, had reached the rim of the bowl. The last showed by certain marks plain enough when the crusty, two-inch stratum of upper coating was broken away. It was puzzling.

The nature of that thin, desiccated effluvium which seemed to cover everything even to the lower foot or two of brick, came in for next inspection. It was strange stuff, unlike any earth I ever had seen, though undoubtedly some form of scum drained in from the swamp at the time of river floods or cloudbursts (which in this section are common enough in spring and fall). It crumbled beneath the fingers. When I walked over it, the stuff crunched hollowly. In fainter degree it possessed the fishy odor also.

I took some samples where it lay thickest upon the ground, and also a few where there seemed to be no more than a depth of a sheet of paper. Later I would have a laboratory analysis made.

Apart from any possible bearing the stuff might have upon the disappearance of my three friends, I felt the tug of article interest—that wonder over anything strange or seemingly inexplicable which lends the hunt for fact a certain glamor and romance all its own. To myself I was going to have to explain sooner or later just why this layer covered the entire space within the walls and was not perceptible *anywhere* outside! The enigma could wait, however—or so I decided.

Far more interesting were the traces of violence apparent on wall and what once had been a house. The latter seemed to have been ripped from its foundations by a giant hand, crushed out of semblance to a dwelling, and then cast in fragments about the base of wall—mainly on the south side, where heaps of twisted, broken timbers lay in profusion. On the opposite side there had been such heaps once, but now only charred sticks, coated with that gray-black, omipresent coat of desiccation, remained. These piles of charcoal had been sifted and examined most carefully by the authorities, as one theory had been advanced that Cranmer had burned the bodies of his victims. Yet no sign whatever of human remains was discovered.

The fire, however, pointed out one odd fact which controverted the reconstructions made by detectives months before. The latter, suggesting the dried scum to have drained in from the swamp, believed that the house timbers had floated out to the sides of the wall—there to arrange themselves in a series of piles! The absurdity of such a theory showed even more plainly in the fact that *if* the scum had filtered through in such a flood, the timbers most certainly had been dragged into piles *previously!* Some had burned—*and the scum coated their charred surfaces!*

What had been the force which had torn the lodge to bits as if in spiteful fury? Why had the parts of the wreckage been burned, the rest to escape?

Right here I felt was the keynote to the mystery, yet I could imagine no explanation. That John Corliss Cranmer himself—

physically sound, yet a man who for decades had led a sedentary life—could have accomplished such destruction, unaided, was difficult to believe.

V

I TURNED my attention to the wall, hoping for evidence which might suggest another theory.

That wall had been an example of the worst snide construction. Though little more than a year old, the parts left standing showed evidence that they had begun to decay the day the last brick was laid. The mortar had fallen from the interstices. Here and there a brick had cracked and dropped out. Fibrils of the climbing vines had penetrated crevices, working for early destruction.

And one side already had fallen.

It was here that the first glimmering suspicion of the terrible truth was forced upon me. The scattered bricks, even those which had rolled inward toward the gaping foundation lodge, *had not been coated with scum!* This was curious, yet it could be explained by surmise that the flood itself had undermined this weakest portion of the wall. I cleared away a mass of brick from the spot on which the structure had stood; to my surprise I found it exceptionally firm! Hard red clay lay beneath! The flood conception was faulty; only some great force, exerted from inside or outside, could have wreaked such destruction.

When careful measurement, analysis and deduction convinced me—mainly from the fact that the lowermost layers of brick all had fallen *outward,* while the upper portions toppled *in*—I began to link up this mysterious and horrific force with the one which had rent the Lodge asunder. It looked as though a typhoon or gigantic centrifuge had needed elbow room in ripping down the wooden structure.

But I got nowhere with the theory, though in ordinary affairs I am called a man of too great imaginative tendencies. No less than three editors have cautioned me on this point. Perhaps it was the narrowing influence of great personal sympathy—yes, and love. I make no excuses, though beyond a dim understanding that some terrific, implacable force must have made this spot his playground, I ended my ninth day of note-taking and investigation almost as much in the dark as I had been while a thousand miles away in Chicago.

Then I started among the darkies and Cajans. A whole day I listened to yarns of the days which preceded Cranmer's escape from Elizabeth Ritter Hospital—days in which furtive men sniffed poisoned air for miles around Dead House, finding the odor intolerable. Days in which it seemed none possessed nerve enough to approach close. Days when the most fanciful tales of mediaeval superstitions were spun. These tales I shall not give; the truth is incredible enough.

At noon upon the eleventh day I chanced upon Rori Pailleron, a Cajan—and one of the least prepossessing of all with whom I had come in contact. "Chanced" perhaps is a bad word. I had listed every dweller of the woods within a five mile radius. Rori was sixteenth on my list. I went to him only after interviewing all four of the Crabiers and two whole families of Pichons. And Rori regarded me with the utmost suspicion until I made him a present of the two quarts of "shinny" purchased of the Pichons.

Because long practice has perfected me in the technique of seeming to drink another man's awful liquor—no, I'm not an absolute prohibitionist; fine wine or twelve-year-in-cask Bourbon whiskey arouses my definite interest—I fooled Pailleron from the start. I shall omit preliminaries, and leap to the first admission from him that he knew more concerning Dead House and its former inmates than any of the other darkies or Cajans roundabout.

" . . . But I ain't talkin'. *Sacre!* If I should open my gab, what might fly out? It is for keeping silent, y'r damn right! . . ."

I agreed. He was a wise man—educated to some extent in the queer schools and churches maintained exclusively by Cajans in the depths of the woods, yet naive withal.

We drank. And I never had to ask another leading question. The liquor made him want to interest me; and the only

extraordinary topic in this whole neck of the woods was the Dead House.

Three-quarters of a pint of acrid, nauseous fluid, and he hinted darkly. A pint, and he told me something I scarcely could believe. Another half-pint. . . . But I shall give his confession in condensed form.

He had known Joe Sibley, the octoroon chef, houseman and valet who served Cranmer. Through Joe, Rori had furnished certain indispensables in way of food to the Cranmer household. At first, these salable articles had been exclusively vegetable—white and yellow turnip, sweet potatoes, corn and beans—but later, *meat!*

Yes, meat especially—whole lambs, slaughtered and quartered, the coarsest variety of piney-woods pork and beef, all in immense quantity!

VI

IN DECEMBER of the fatal winter Lee and his wife stopped down at the Lodge for ten days or thereabouts.

They were enroute to Cuba at the time, intending to be away five or six weeks. Their original plan had been only to wait over a day or so in the piney-woods, but something caused an amendment to the scheme.

The two dallied. Lee seemed to have become vastly absorbed in something—so much absorbed that it was only when Peggy insisted upon continuing their trip, that he could tear himself away.

It was during those ten days that he began buying meat. Meager bits of it at first—a rabbit, a pair of squirrels, or perhaps a few quail beyond the number he and Peggy shot. Rori furnished the game, thinking nothing of it except that Lee paid double prices—and insisted upon keeping the purchases secret from other members of the household.

"I'm putting it across on the Governor, Rori!" he said once with a wink. "Going to give him the shock of his life. So you mustn't let on, even to Joe about what I want you to do. Maybe it won't work out, but if it does . . .! Dad'll have the scientific world at his feet! He doesn't blow his own horn anywhere near enough, you know."

Rori didn't know. Hadn't a suspicion what Lee was talking about. Still, if this rich, young idiot wanted to pay him a half dollar in good silver coin for a quail that anyone—himself included—could knock down with a five-cent shell, Rori was well satisfied to keep his mouth shut. Each evening he brought some of the small game. And each day Lee Cranmer seemed to have use for an additional quail, or so. . . .

When he was ready to leave for Cuba, Lee came forward with the strangest of propositions. He fairly whispered his vehemence and desire for secrecy! He would tell Rori, and would pay the Cajan five hundred dollars—half in advance, and half at the end of five weeks when Lee himself would return from Cuba—provided Rori agreed to adhere absolutely to a certain secret program! The money was more than a fortune to Rori; it was undreamt-of affluence. The Cajan acceded.

"He wuz tellin' me then how the ol' man had raised some kind of pet," Rori confided, "an' wanted to get shet of it. So he give it to Lee, tellin' him to kill it, but Lee was sot on foolin' him. W'at I ask yer is, w'at kind of a pet is it w'at lives down in a mud sink an' *eats a couple hawgs every night?"*

I couldn't imagine, so I pressed him for further details. Here at last was something which sounded like a clue!

He really knew too little. The agreement with Lee provided that if Rori carried out the provisions exactly, he should be paid extra and at his exorbitant scale of all additional outlay, when Lee returned.

The young man gave him a daily schedule which Rori showed. Each evening he was to procure, slaughter and cut up a definite—and growing—amount of meat. Every item was checked, and I saw that they ran from five pounds up to *forty!*

"What in heaven's name, did you do with it?" I demanded, excited now and pouring him an additional drink for fear caution might return to him.

"Took it through the bushes in back an' slung it in the mud sink there! An' suthin' come up an' drug it down!"

"A 'gator?"

"*Diable!* How should I know? It was

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dark. I wouldn't go close." He shuddered, and the fingers which lifted his glass shook as with sudden chill. "Mebbe you'd of done it, huh? Not *me,* though! The young fellah tole me to sling it in, an' I slung it.

"A couple times I come around in the light, but there wasn't nuthin' there you could see. Jes' mud, an' some water. Mebbe the thing didn't come out in daytimes. . . ."

"Perhaps not," I agreed, straining every mental resource to imagine what Lee's sinister pet could have been. "But you said something about *two hogs a day?* What did you mean by that? This paper, proof enough that you're telling the truth so far, states that on the thirty-fifth day you were to throw forty pounds of meat—any kind—into the sink. Two hogs, even the piney-woods variety, weigh a lot more than forty pounds!"

"Them was after—after he come back!"

From this point onward, Rori's tale became more and more enmeshed in the vagaries induced by bad liquor. His tongue thickened. I shall give his story without attempt to reproduce further verbal barbarities, or the occasional prodding I had to give in order to keep him from maundering into foolish jargon.

Lee had paid munificently. His only objection to the manner in which Rori had carried out his orders was that the orders themselves had been deficient. The pet, he said had grown enormously. It was hungry, ravenous. Lee himself had supplemented the fare with huge pails of scraps from the kitchen.

From that day Lee purchased from Rori whole sheep and hogs! The Cajan continued to bring the carcasses at nightfall, but no longer did Lee permit him to approach the pool. The young man appeared chronically excited now. He had a tremendous secret—one the extent of which even his father did not guess, and one which would astonish the world! Only a week or two more and he would spring it. First he would have to arrange certain data.

Then came the day when everyone disappeared from Dead House. Rori came around several times, but concluded that all of the occupants had folded tents and departed—doubtless taking their mysterious

"pet" along. Only when he saw from a distance Joe, the octoroon servant, returning along the road on foot toward the Lodge, did his slow mental processes begin to ferment. That afternoon Rori visited the strange place for the next to last time.

He did not go to the Lodge itself—and there were reasons. While still some hundreds of yards away from the place a terrible, sustained screaming reached his ears! It was faint, yet unmistakably the voice of Joe! Throwing a pair of number two shells into the breach of his shotgun, Rori hurried on, taking his usual path through the brush at the back.

He saw—and as he told me even "shinny" drunkenness fled his chattering tones—Joe, the octoroon. Aye, he stood in the yard, far from the pool into which Rori had thrown the carcasses—*and Joe could not move!*

Rori failed to explain in full, but *something*, a slimy, amorphous something, which glistened in the sunlight, already had engulfed the man to his shoulders! Breath was cut off. Joe's contorted face writhed with horror and beginning suffocation. One hand—all that was free of the rest of him!—beat feebly upon the rubbery, translucent thing that was engulfing his body!

Then Joe sank from sight. . . .

VII

FIVE days of liquored indulgence passed before Rori, alone in his shaky cabin, convinced himself that he had seen a phantasy born of alcohol. He came back the last time—to find a high wall of brick surrounding the Lodge, and including the pool of mud into which he had thrown the meat!

While he hesitated, circling the place without discovering an opening—which he would not have dared to use, even had he found it—a crashing, tearing of timbers, and persistent sound of awesome destruction came from within. He swung himself into one of the oaks near the wall. And he was just in time to see the last supporting stanchions of the Lodge give way *outward!*

The whole structure came apart. The roof fell in—yet seemed to move after it had fallen! Logs of wall deserted retaining grasp of their spikes like layers of plywood in the grasp of the shearing machine!

That was all. Soddenly intoxicated now, Rori mumbled more phrases, giving me the idea that on another day when he became sober once more, he might add to his statements, but I—numbed to the soul—scarcely cared. If that which he related was true, what nightmare of madness must have been consummated here!

I could vision some things now which concerned Lee and Peggy, horrible things. Only remembrance of Elsie kept me faced forward in the search—for now it seemed almost that the handiwork of a madman must be preferred to what Rori claimed to have seen! What had been that sinister, translucent thing? That glistening thing which jumped upward about a man, smothering, engulfing?

Queerly enough, though such a theory as came most easily to mind now would have outraged reason in me if suggested concerning total strangers, I asked myself only what details of Rori's revelation had been exaggerated by fright and fumes of liquor. And as I sat on the creaking bench in his cabin, staring unseeing as he lurched down to the floor, fumbling with a lock box of green tin which lay under his cot, and muttering, the answer to all my questions lay within reach!

IT WAS not until next day, however, that I made the discovery. Heavy of heart I had reexamined the spot where the Lodge had stood, then made my way to the Cajan's cabin again, seeking sober confirmation of what he had told me during intoxication.

In imagining that such a spree for Rori would be ended by a single night, however, I was mistaken. He lay sprawled almost as I had left him. Only two factors were changed. No "shinny" was left—and lying open, with its miscellaneous contents strewed about, was the tin box. Rori somehow had managed to open it with the tiny key still clutched in his hand.

Concern for his safety alone was what made me notice the box. It was a receptacle for small fishing tackle of the sort carried

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here and there by any sportsman. Tangles of Dowagiac minnows, spoon hooks ranging in size to silver-backed number eights; three reels still carrying line of different weights, spinners, casting plugs, wobblers, floating baits, were spilled out upon the rough plank flooring where they might snag Rori badly if he rolled. I gathered them, intending to save him an accident.

With the miscellaneous assortment in my hands, however, I stopped dead. Something had caught my eye—something lying flush with the bottom of the lock box! I stared, and then swiftly tossed the hooks and other impedimenta upon the table. What I had glimpsed there in the box was a loose-leaf notebook of the sort used for recording laboratory data! And Rori scarcely could read, let alone *write!*

Feverishly, a riot of recognition, surmise, hope and fear bubbling in my brain, I grabbed the book and threw it open. At once I knew that this was the end. The pages were scribbled in pencil, but the handwriting was that precise chirography I knew as belonging to John Corliss Cranmer, the scientist!

" . . . Could he not have obeyed my instructions! Oh, God! This . . ."

These were the words at top of the first page which met my eye.

Because knowledge of the circumstances, the relation of which I pried out of the reluctant Rori only some days later when I had him in Mobile as a police witness for the sake of my friend's vindication, is necessary to understanding, I shall interpolate.

Rori had not told me everything. On his late visit to the vicinage of Dead House he saw more. A crouching figure, seated Turk fashion on top of the wall, appeared to be writing industriously. Rori recognized the man as Cranmer, yet did not hail him. He had no opportunity.

Just as the Cajan came near, Cranmer rose, thrust the notebook, which had rested across his knees, into the box. Then he turned, tossed outside the wall both the locked box and a ribbon to which was attached the key.

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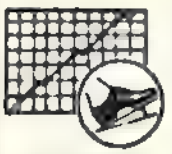

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five seconds he seemed to invoke the mercy of Power beyond all of man's scientific prying. And finally he leaped, *inside. . . .!*

Rori did not climb to investigate. He knew that directly below this portion of wall lay the mud sink into which he had thrown the chunks of meat!

VIII

THIS is a true transcription of the statement I inscribed, telling the sequence of actual events at Dead House. The original of the statement now lies in the archives of the detective department.

Cranmer's notebook, though written in a precise hand, yet betrayed the man's insanity by incoherence and frequent repetitions. My statement has been accepted now, both by alienists and by detectives who had entertained different theories in respect to the case. It quashes the noisome hints and suspicions regarding three of the finest Americans who ever lived—and also one queer supposition dealing with supposed criminal tendencies in poor Joe, the octoroon

John Corliss Cranmer *went* insane for sufficient cause!

AS READERS of popular fiction know well, Lee Cranmer's *forte* was the writing of what is called—among fellows in the craft—the pseudo-scientific story. In plain words, this means a yarn, based upon solid fact in the field of astronomy, chemistry, anthropology or whatnot, which carries to logical conclusion unproved theories of men who devote their lives to searching out further nadirs of fact.

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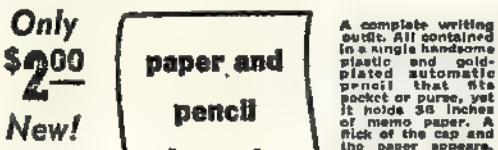

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Lee wrote three novels, all published, which dealt with such subjects—two of the three secured from his own father's labors, and the other speculating upon the discovery and possible uses of inter-atomic energy. Upon John Corliss Cranmer's return from Prague that fatal winter, the father informed Lee that a greater subject than any with which the young man had dealt, now could be tapped.

Cranmer, senior, had devised a way in which the limiting factors in protozoic life and *growth*, could be nullified; in time, and with cooperation of biologists who specialized upon *karyokinesis* and embryology of higher forms, he hoped—to put the theory in pragmatic terms—to be able to grow swine the size of elephants, quail or woodcock with breasts from which a hundredweight of white meat could be cut away, and steers whose dehorned heads might butt at the third story of a skyscraper!

Such result would revolutionize the methods of food supply, of course. It also would hold out hope for all undersized specimens of humanity—provided only that if factors inhibiting growth could be deleted, some method of stopping gianthood also could be developed.

Cranmer the elder, through use of an undescribed (in the notebook) growth medium of which one constituent was *agar-agar*, and the use of radium emanations, had succeeded in bringing about apparently unrestricted growth in the paramœcium protozoan, certain of the vegetable growths (among which were bacteria), and in the amorphous cell of protoplasm known as the amœba—the last a single cell containing only neucleolus, neucleus, and a space known as the contractile vacuole which somehow aided in throwing off particles impossible to assimilate directly. This point may be remembered in respect to the piles of lumber left near the outside walls surrounding Dead House!

When Lee Cranmer and his wife came south to visit, John Corliss Cranmer showed his son an amœba—normally an organism visible under low-power microscope—which he had absolved from natural growth inhibitions. This amœba, a rubbery, amor-

phous mass of protoplasm, was of the size then of a large beef liver. It could have been held in two cupped hands, placed side by side.

"How large could it grow?" asked Lee, wide-eyed and interested.

"So far as I know," answered the father, "there is *no* limit—now! It might, if it got food enough, grow to be as big as the Masonic Temple!

"But take it out and kill it. Destroy the organism utterly—burning the fragments—else there is no telling what might happen. The amœba, as I have explained, reproduces by simple division. Any fragment remaining might be dangerous."

Lee took the rubbery, translucent giant cell—but he did not obey orders. Instead of destroying it as his father had directed, Lee thought out a plan. Suppose he should grow this organism to tremendous size? Suppose, when the tale of his father's accomplishment were spread, an amœba of many tons weight could be shown in evidence? Lee, of somewhat sensational cast of mind, determined instantly to keep secret the fact that he was not destroying the organism, but encouraging its further growth. Thought of possible peril never crossed his mind.

He arranged to have the thing fed—allowing for normal increase of size in an abnormal thing. It fooled him only in growing much more rapidly. When he came back from Cuba the amœba practically filled the whole of the mud sink hollow. He had to give it much greater supplies. . . .

The giant cell came to absorb as much as two hogs in a single day. During daylight, while hunger still was appeased, it never emerged, however. That remained for the time that it could secure no more food near at hand to satisfy its ravenous and increasing appetite.

Only instinct for the sensational kept Lee from telling Peggy, his wife, all about the matter. Lee hoped to spring a *coup* which would immortalize his father, and surprise his wife terrifically. Therefore, he kept his own counsel—and made bargains with the Cajan, Rori, who supplied food daily for the shapeless monster of the pool.

The tragedy itself came suddenly and unexpectedly. Peggy, feeding the two Gordon setters that Lee and she used for quail hunting, was in the Lodge yard before sunset. She romped alone, as Lee himself was dressing.

Of a sudden her screams cut the still air! Without her knowledge, ten-foot *pseudopods*—those flowing tentacles of protoplasm sent forth by the sinister occupant of the pool—slid out and around her putteed ankles.

For a moment she did not understand. Then, at first suspicion of the horrid truth, her cries rent the air. Lee, at that time struggling to lace a pair of high shoes, straightened, paled, and grabbed a revolver as he dashed out.

In another room a scientist, absorbed in his notetaking, glanced up, frowned, and then—recognizing the voice—shed his white gown and came out. He was too late to do aught but gasp with horror.

In the yard Peggy was half engulfed in a squamous, rubbery something which at first he could not analyze.

Lee, his boy, was fighting with the sticky folds, and slowly, surely, losing his own grip upon the earth!

IX

JOHN CORLISS CRANMER was by no means a coward, he stared, cried aloud, then ran indoors, seizing the first two weapons which came to hand—a shotgun and hunting knife which lay in sheath in a cartridged belt across hook of the hall-tree. The knife was ten inches in length and razor keen.

Cranmer rushed out again. He saw an indecent fluid something—which as yet he had not had time to classify—lumping itself into a six-foot-high center before his very eyes!

It looked like one of the micro-organisms he had studied! One grown to frightful dimensions. An amœba!

There, some minutes suffocated in the rubbery folds—yet still apparent beneath the glistening ooze of this monster—were two bodies.

They were dead. He knew it. Nevertheless he attacked the flowing, senseless

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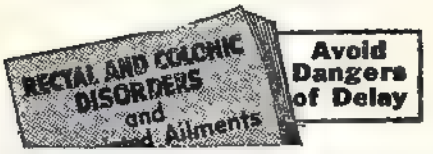

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monster with his knife. Shot would do no good. And he found that even the deep, terrific slashes made by his knife closed together in a moment and healed. The monster was invulnerable to ordinary attack!

A pair of *pseudopods* sought out his ankles, attempting to bring him low. Both of these he severed—and escaped. Why did he try? He did not know. The two whom he had sought to rescue were dead, buried under folds of this horrid thing he knew to be his own discovery and fabrication.

Then it was that revulsion and insanity came upon him.

There ended the story of John Corliss Cranmer, save for one hastily scribbled paragraph—evidently written at the time Rori had seen him atop the wall.

May we not supply with assurance the intervening steps?

Cranmer was known to have purchased a whole pen of hogs a day or two following the tragedy. These animals never were seen again. During the time the wall was being constructed is it not reasonable to assume that he fed the giant organism within—to keep it quiet? His scientist brain must have visualized clearly the havoc and horror which could be wrought by the loathsome thing if it ever were driven by hunger to flow away from the Lodge and prey upon the countryside!

With the wall once in place, he evidently figured that starvation or some other means which he could supply would kill the thing. One of the means had been made by setting fire to several piles of the disgorged timbers; probably this had no effect whatever.

The amœba was to accomplish still more destruction. In the throes of hunger it threw its gigantic, formless strength against the house walls *from the inside;* then every edible morsel within was assimilated, the logs, rafters and other fragments being worked out through the contractile *vacuole.*

During some of its last struggles, undoubtedly, the side wall of brick was weakened—not to collapse, however, until the giant amœba no longer could take advantage of the breach.

In final death lassitude, the amœba stretched itself out in a thin layer over the

ground. There it succumbed, though there is no means of estimating how long a time intervened.

The last paragraph in Cranmer's notebook, scrawled so badly that it is possible some words I have not deciphered correctly, read as follows:

"In my work I have found the means of creating a monster. The unnatural thing, in turn, has destroyed my work and those whom I held dear. It is in vain that I assure myself of innocence of spirit. Mine is the crime of presumption. Now, as expiation—worthless though that may be—I give myself. . . ."

It is better not to think of that last leap, and the struggle of an insane man in the grip of the dying monster.

STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION, required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, as amended by the Acts of March 3, 1933, and July 2, 1946, of WEIRD TALES, published bi-monthly at New York, N. Y. for October 1, 1951.

1. The names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are:
Publisher, SHORT STORIES, Inc.,
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.
Editor, D. McIlwraith,
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.
Managing editor, None.
Business manager, William J. Delaney,
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

2. The owner is: (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, its name and address, as well as that of each individual member, must be given.)
Short Stories, Inc.,
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.
W. J. Delaney,
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

3. The known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: (If there are none, so state.) None.

4. Paragraphs 2 and 3 include, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting; also the statements in the two paragraphs show the affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner.

W. J. DELANEY,
(Signature of President)

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 1 day of October, 1951.

[SEAL]

HENRY J. PAUROWSKI
Notary Public, State of New York
No. 03-3039000
Qualified in Bronx County
Certs. filed with N. Y. Co. Clk. & Reg.
(My commission expires March 30, 1953.)

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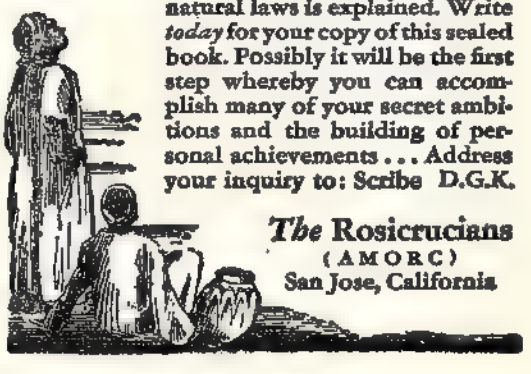

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The Eyrie

(*Continued from page 6*)

The Editor, WEIRD TALES
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

The return of Clark Ashton Smith to your pages in story form was a great surprise, and a pleasant one. His fiction has been all too sparse during the past several years. "The Metamorphosis of Earth" gives rise to a hope that we may soon read more of Averoigne, Xiccarph, Xothique, or others of Smith's exotic worlds of the imagination. The present story was too reminiscent of the "monster invasion" stories of the early thirties, but the very fact that Smith is once more represented in WT *is a cause for hope.*

You have no doubt received many suggestions as to what stories to reprint, and here are a few more: "The Enchantress of Sylaire" and "Who Are the Living" by C. A. Smith, "Dread Summons" by Paul Ernst, "Lynne Foster Is Dead" by H. P. Lovecraft, Henry Kuttner's stories of Elak of Atlantis, "The Sea Witch" by Nictzin Dyalhis, "Laocoon" by Bassett Morgan.

You have the richest back-file in the history of fantasy to pick from, and with one or two (but surely no more) reprints in each issue, WT *will be on the top of the heap.*

Robert E. Briney,
561 W. Western Avenue,
Muskegon, Michigan

The Editor, WEIRD TALES
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

I would like to tell you that I appreciate the height to which your magazine has soared in the past years, and with the ease that it has stayed as the number one magazine in the minds of many countless hundreds of readers.

Your last issue was up to the usual par with its host of many fine stories. I would rate them in this order: First, I would give honors to that superb writer of the weird and macabre, H. P. Lovecraft, for writing

that terrific story "Dagon"; next best on my list is Seabury Quinn's "Fling the Dust Aside", a truly fine story; next on my list is "Hideaway", a good story but a bit long. The other stories were good, but I am sorry to say that they would not actually raise the high standard of your magazine.

Your poems were exceptionally good for that particular issue.

One thing that would cut the number of readers of your mag would be the omission of the Eyrie. This I hope you will regard as a permanent fixture. If it were omitted, the readers would lose their chance to express themselves in what they think would be for the betterment of the magazine.

WEIRD TALES *has the quality that has made me a faithful reader as millions of others like myself have become after trying other mags and rejecting them for the quality that is only found in* WEIRD TALES.

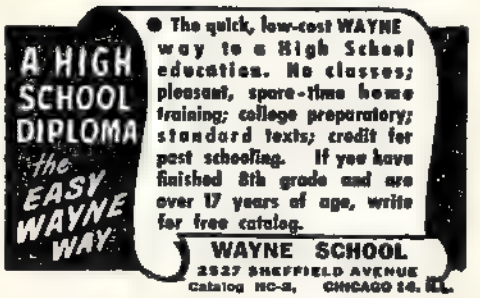
Robert Fazio,
Glendale, N. Y.

The Editor, WEIRD TALES
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

My hands are still icy and teeth still chattering after reading Howard's, "Pigeon's From Hell". Holy Moses and suffering cats, it's been a long time since I had a story raise the goose pimples on my flesh and ice water run along my spine and I've been a reader for years. My hat's off to that guy and may you print many more of his stories if he can put out more like this. This is the first letter I have ever written to any magazine and although I have been writing stories for years (not the weird type) I have never had my name in print before.

How these writers write weird and horror stories and still keep from going goofy is beyond me. Maybe you may see me in print yet, if I can get up enough nerve to haul the Cellar in the Vasty deep thing out long enough to get it finished. But I love to read your magazine, and keep up with the best of the spooks and demons, vampires, etc.

Florence Trento,
Sherman Oaks, Cal.



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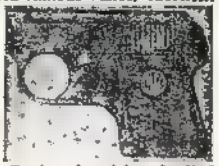

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When the Birds Fly South by Stanton A. Coblentz • Stanton Coblentz is a WEIRD TALES favorite, and this story—published originally in 1945—has a vast appeal for our sort of reader. Not only is it weird and bizarre in conception but it also has a good spicing of mystery and adventure, and the enthralling background of an American geological expedition in Afghanistan. Over the whole story broods Yulada, a stone goddess, Sardonic destiny, whose guiding hand will close the story.

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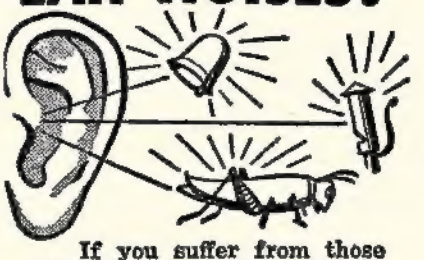

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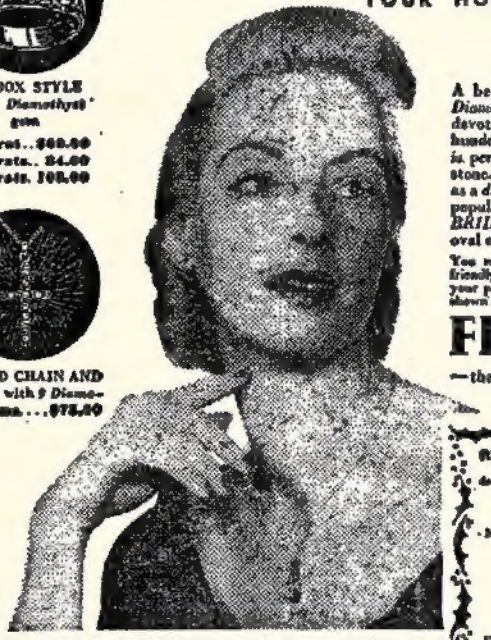

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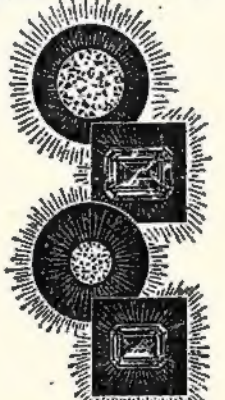

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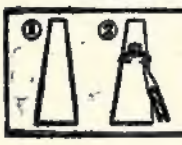

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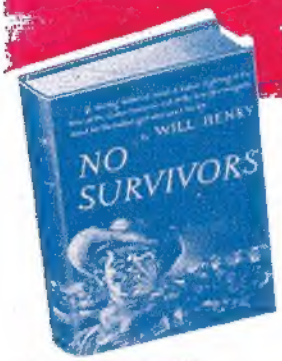

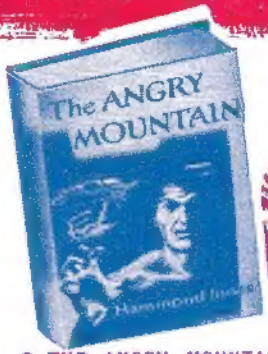

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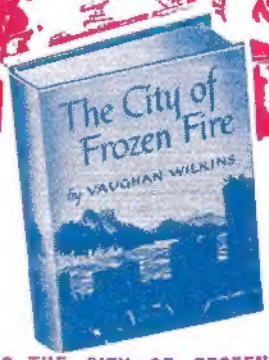

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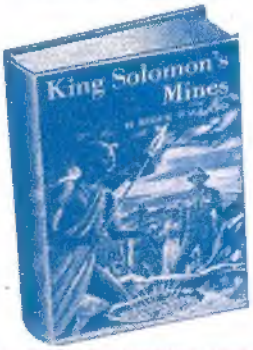

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